PROTAGORAS

Outline of the dialogue

309A-314C Socrates describes to a companion the way he was awakened before dawn by Hippocrates, a young man full of excitement at hearing that Protagoras is in town, and how they filled the time until a more respectable hour discussing what Hippocrates thought he could learn from Protagoras.

314C-316A Socrates and Hippocrates arrive at Callias's house and view Protagoras, Hippias, and Prodicus, the three sophists staying there, amid their groups of followers.

316A-320C Socrates questions Protagoras about what he claims to offer his students. He claims to teach virtue. Socrates doubts that this is possible, and asks for an explanation.

320C-328D Protagoras obliges by telling the assembled crowd a story about Prometheus and Epimetheus, and concludes with an argument about why a teacher like himself is needed.

328D-334C Socrates questions Protagoras about the virtues. Do they form a single whole, and if so are they related like parts of a face or parts of gold? What in particular are the relations between justice and piety, wisdom and moderation, and moderation and justice? Protagoras replies with increasing reluctance until he finally bursts out with a speech about the impossibility of pinning down any single meaning of the good. The crowd applauds.

334C-338E Prominent members of the gathering, including Socrates' young friend Alcibiades who happens to be present, deliberate about how to keep a discussion going between Socrates and Protagoras. They come up with a compromise and prevail on Protagoras to agree to it. They will stick to asking and answering questions, but Protagoras will ask and Socrates will answer.

338E-348C Protagoras asks whether the poet Simonides contradicts himself in an ode Socrates knows well. As soon as he gets Socrates to say there is no contradiction, Protagoras quickly displays an apparent one, to the delight of the crowd. Socrates pretends to need help from Prodicus about the meanings of words, when in fact Protagoras has merely overlooked the distinction between becoming good and being good. Socrates then makes a speech of great length and complexity to save the poet's consistency, only to conclude that serious people would be better off discussing their own opinions than criticizing or defending those of poets. Protagoras is shamed into resuming answering questions from the point at which he had earlier broken off the discussion of the wholeness of virtue.

348C-351B Protagoras claims that courage is very different from the other virtues and independent of them. Socrates asks about the relation of courage to audacity and to wisdom.

351B-358D Socrates asks about the relation of pleasure and the good, and whether being overcome by pleasure is a failure of knowledge. He gains the explicit agreement of Protagoras, Hippias, and Prodicus that it is.

358D-360E Socrates gradually compels Protagoras to back down from his claim that courage is independent of wisdom, though Protagoras still believes that.

360E-end Socrates points out that Protagoras's reluctance to connect courage and knowledge calls in question his claim that virtue is teachable, while his own eagerness to connect them undercuts his own inclination to believe that it is not teachable. Socrates is ready to reopen that question, but Protagoras politely but firmly refuses. Socrates leaves.

309A *Companion*: Where are you appearing from, Socrates? Oh, it's obvious, though; from the hunt after the youthful allure of Alcibiades, right? When I saw him the other day, he appeared to me too to be still beautiful as a man, that's for sure—quite a man, Socrates, speaking between ourselves, even with his beard filled out now.

B *Socrates*: Well, what of it? Aren't you a fan of Homer, who said youth is at its most graceful in one who's just gotten his beard, which is the stage Alcibiades is at now?

Companion: So what's going on now? Are you appearing from beside him? And how is the young fellow disposed toward you?

Socrates: Well disposed, it seemed to me, and not least so on this very day, for he said a lot on my behalf, taking up for me—as a matter of fact I'm coming from him right now. I want to tell you something strange, though: even with him present, I paid no attention to him and often forgot he was there.

C *Companion*: What could have happened with you and him that was such a serious matter? Surely you didn't meet up with anyone else more beautiful, not in this city anyway.

Socrates: I did, very much so.

Companion: What are you saying? A townsman or a foreigner?

Socrates: A foreigner.

Companion: From whereabouts?

Socrates: Abdera.

Companion: And this foreigner seemed to you to be someone so beautiful as to appear more beautiful to you than the son of Cleinias?

Socrates: How could the wisest thing not appear more beautiful, you blessed fellow?

Companion: So, Socrates, you're here with us from meeting up with some wise person?

D *Socrates*: Probably the wisest person of the present day, if it seems to you that the wisest one is Protagoras.

Companion: Oh! What do you mean? Is Protagoras in town?
Socrates: Already his third day here.
Companion: And so you've come right now from having been in his presence?
Socrates: Very much so, and from having said and listened to many things. **310A**
Companion: Well, why don't you go through the conversation for us, unless something prevents you? Sit right here, make this slave here get up.
Socrates: Very well; in fact I'll look on it as a favor if you folks listen.
Companion: And we'll certainly feel the same way toward you if you tell it.
Socrates: That would be a double favor. Just listen, then.

When last night had passed, but still well before dawn, Hippocrates, the son of Apollodorus and brother of Phason, knocked very **B** forcefully on my door with his walking-stick, and when someone opened up for him, he came rushing straight in, and speaking in a loud voice, said "Socrates, are you awake or asleep?" And I recognized his voice and said "Hippocrates, that's you. You're not bringing some news, are you?" "None but good news," he said. "Then you'd do well to tell it," I said; "what is it, and what's your purpose in coming at such a time?"

"*Protagoras*," he said, standing next to me; "he's here." "Yes, since day before yesterday," I said; "have you just found out?" "Just in the evening, for gods' sake!" he said, while he was groping around **C** for my couch, and he sat down by my feet and said: "Very late in the evening, in fact, when I got back from Oenoe, because my slave Satyrus ran off—oh and when I was going to tell you that I'd be chasing him, something else distracted me. But when I came back and we'd had dinner and were about to turn in, that's when my brother tells me Protagoras has come. Even then I started to go straight to you, but then it seemed to me to be too far into the night, but as soon **D** as sleep had relieved me of fatigue, I got right up and made my way here like this."

And noticing his forcefulness and excitement, I said "What's that got to do with you? Protagoras hasn't done you any wrong, has he?" And he laughed and said "By gods he has, Socrates! Because he's wise all by himself and doesn't make me that way." "Yes he will, by Zeus," I said, "if you give him money and persuade him to, he'll make you wise too." "Oh, Zeus and gods," he said, "if it would only depend on **E** that, I wouldn't spare anything of my own or my friends. But it's for these very reasons that I've come to you now, for you to talk to him for me. Because I'm too young, and on top of that I've never even seen Protagoras or heard him at all; I was still a little boy when he came to town before. But everybody praises the man, Socrates, and claims he's the wisest at speaking. So why don't we walk over to him, so we

311A can catch him indoors? He's putting up at Callias's place, Hipponicus' son, so I've heard. So let's go."

And I said "Let's not go there yet, good fellow—it's early—but let's get up and go into the courtyard; we'll pass the time by walking around in it until it gets light. Then we'll go. For Protagoras spends most of his time indoors, so have courage. We'll most likely catch him in."

After that we got up and went around in the courtyard. And to try
B out Hippocrates' strength, I started to test him, asking him "Tell me, Hippocrates, you're making an effort now to go to Protagoras and pay him money as a fee on your own behalf; what's your idea? Who will you be going to and what will you become? Just as, if you were proposing to go to your namesake Hippocrates, the one from Cos, one of the Asclepiads, to pay *him* money as a fee on your own behalf, what would you answer if someone asked you, 'Tell me, Hippocrates,
C you're going to pay Hippocrates a fee because he's what?'" "I'd say because he's a doctor," he said. "'So that you'd become what?'" "A doctor," he said. "But if you were intending to go to Polycleitus the Argive or Pheidias the Athenian to pay them a fee on your own behalf, what would you answer if someone asked you, 'You have the idea of paying this money to Polycleitus and Pheidias because they're what?'" "I'd say because they're sculptors." "'So that you yourself would become what?'" "Obviously a sculptor."

D "Okay," I said, "so now, when you and I go to Protagoras, we'll be prepared to pay him money as a fee on your behalf, if our resources are sufficient and we persuade him by means of them, and if not we'll use up our friends' resources too. So if, when we're so exceedingly eager, what should we answer someone who asks us, 'Tell me, Socrates and Hippocrates, you fellows have the idea of paying money
E to Protagoras because he's what?' What other name do we hear spoken about Protagoras, the same way 'sculptor' is about Pheidias and 'poet' about Homer—what do we hear like that about Protagoras?" "Well, Socrates, what people *say*, anyway, is that the man is a sophist," he said. "Therefore we're going there to pay him money because he's a sophist?" "Definitely." "So if someone asked you the further question
312A about this, too, 'Then you're going to Protagoras so you yourself will become what?'" And he spoke, turning red—for a bit of day was just breaking, so he became clearly visible—and said "If it's anything like the previous cases, it's obviously so I'll become a sophist." "*You*," I said; "before the gods, wouldn't you be ashamed to hold yourself out among the Greeks as a sophist?" "By Zeus, yes, Socrates, if I really have to say what I think."

"Well then, Hippocrates, maybe you're assuming the learning
B you'll get from Protagoras won't be of that sort, but the sort that came from your writing teacher, your harp teacher, or your athletic trainer, is that it? Because with each of these, you didn't learn something for

the sake of an art, as if you were going to be a professional, but for the sake of an education, as befits a private person and a free man."[1] "The learning one gets from Protagoras seems to me to be more of that sort," he said, "very much so."

"So do you know what you're going to be doing now, or does it escape your notice?" I said. "In what connection?" "That you're about to entrust your own soul to the care of a man who is, as you claim, a **C** sophist, but I'd be surprised if you know what in the world a sophist *is*. Yet if you're ignorant of this, you don't know what you're turning your soul over to, or whether to a good or a bad thing." "Well, I think I know," he said. "Speak up, then: what do you consider a sophist to be?" "I'd say he's just what the name says," he said: "someone who knows wise things." "No doubt it's possible," I said, "to say that about painters and carpenters too, that they're people who know wise things, but if someone were to ask us, 'Among wise things, what is **D** it that painters are knowers of?' we'd tell him, presumably, that it's of things related to the producing of likenesses, and so on with the others. But if someone asked this: 'And the sophist? What among the wise things is he a knower of?' What should we reply to him? What sorts of work is he in charge of?"

"What should we say he is, Socrates? Someone in charge of making a person formidable at speaking?" "Well, maybe we'd be telling the truth," I said, "but not enough of it, because our answer still leaves out the question of what it is a sophist makes a person formidable at speaking about. Presumably a harp-teacher likewise makes a person **E** formidable at speaking about the very thing he also knows, namely harp-playing, right?" "Yes." "Okay, so then what does a sophist make a person formidable at speaking about?" "Is it clear that it's about the very thing he also knows?" "Likely so. So what is this that the sophist is a knower of himself and also makes his pupil a knower?" "By Zeus," he said, "I no longer have anything to tell you."

And after that I said, "What about it then? Do you know what **313A** sort of risk you're getting yourself into by putting your soul at stake? If you had to entrust your body to someone, running the risk that it would become either sound or unsound, you would consider carefully from many angles whether it should be entrusted or not, and call in the advice of friends and relatives while investigating the matter for

1 A number of words in this speech are worth noting: a writing teacher (*grammatistês*) was someone skilled at reading and writing; a harp teacher (*kitharistês*) was skilled at playing a small stringed instrument somewhat comparable to our guitars; an art (*technê*) was any kind of know-how involving some theoretical knowledge, some manual skill, and a facility acquired by practice; a professional (*dêmiourgos*) practiced an art for anyone who would pay; eduation (*paideia*) referred not to training of any kind but to a preparation for a good life; and a free man (*eleutheros*) was someone who was not only not the slave of a master but not bound by the need to earn a living. Sophists were traveling teachers who claimed to provide, for money, an education, rather than a training in any art.

a good many days. But when it comes to your soul, something you regard more highly than your body—and the good or bad outcome of everything of yours rests on whether *it* becomes sound or unsound—in
B this case you don't consult your father or your brother or any of your companions about whether or not your soul ought to be entrusted to this foreigner who's come here. But after you heard about him in the evening, as you say, you come at the break of dawn, have no discussion or deliberation about this matter of whether you should entrust yourself to him or not, and you're ready to spend your own money and that of your friends, as though you'd already determined that it's necessary at all costs to get together with Protagoras, whom, as
C you claim, you neither know nor ever had a conversation with, and whom you call by the name of 'sophist,' while it plainly appears that you don't know what in the world a sophist is, though you're about to entrust yourself to one—is that it?" And he, having listened, said "So it seems, Socrates, from the things you're saying."

"Well, Hippocrates, isn't the sophist in fact a sort of merchant or dealer in commodities from which a soul is nourished? He appears to me to be something of that sort." "But Socrates, what is a soul nourished by?" "By learnable things, presumably," I said. "And make sure, my friend, that the sophist doesn't deceive us when he praises the things he offers for sale, the way the merchant and dealer do about
D nourishment for the body. For doubtless they have no knowledge themselves of what's sound or unsound among the the commodities they bring to market, but they praise everything they offer for sale, and those who buy from them have no knowledge of it either, unless one of them happens to be a fitness expert or a doctor. And in the same way, those who carry the learnable things around from city to city, as dealers offering them up for sale, praise everything they have for sale to the one who desires them at any moment; but it's probable, you best of men, that some of these too are ignorant of what among
E the things they offer for sale is sound or unsound for the soul. And it's the same way too with those who buy from them, unless one of them happens to have the skill of a doctor, in this case about the soul. So if you happen to be someone who knows what among these things is sound or unsound, it's safe for you to buy learnable things from Protagoras or from anyone else whatever; if not, though, you
314A blessed one, see that you don't roll the dice and take a risk with the most precious things. For as a matter of fact, the risk in the buying of learnable things is much greater than in the buying of food. For when food and drink are purchased from the dealer or merchant, it's possible to carry them off in separate containers, and before admitting them into the body by drinking or eating, it's possible to put them away at home in order to get advice by calling upon someone who understands what should be eaten or drunk and what not, and how
B much and when, so that there's no great risk in buying them. But

with learnable things, there's no such thing as carrying one off in a separate container, but once one has handed over the price and taken the learnable thing into the soul itself and learned it, it's necessary to go away either harmed or benefited. So let's consider these things with our elders too, since we are still young to be making a decision on so great a matter. For now, though, just as we planned, let's go and listen to the man, and then when we've heard him let's take counsel with others, since Protagoras is not the only one at that very place, but **C** Hippias the Elean is there too, and so, I believe, is Prodicus of Ceos, and lots of other wise men as well."

This seemed a good plan to us, and we made our way there. But when we came into the front courtyard, we stood there having a discussion of some line of argument that had overtaken us on the road, and so that we wouldn't leave it unfinished, but would go inside having completed it, we went on discussing it while standing there in the forecourt until we'd come to agreement with each other. And it seems to me that the doorkeeper, a eunuch, was listening to us, and most likely he was fed up with the constant arrivals at the house by **D** the multitude of sophists; anyway, when we knocked on the door, he opened up and said "Oh great, some sophists! He's not free," and with that, using both hands, he slammed the door very energetically, as hard as he could. And we knocked again, and he answered through the locked door, saying "*Guys*,[2] didn't you hear that he's not free?" "My good fellow," I said, "we haven't come to see Callias and we're not sophists. Get a grip on yourself! I assure you we've come because **E** we need to see Protagoras, so announce us." Grudgingly, then, the guy opened up the door for us.

When we got in, we came upon Protagoras walking back and forth in the colonnaded passageway, and walking back and forth with him, lined up on one side were Callias the son of Hipponicus and his brother by the same mother, Paralus the son of Pericles, and **315A** Charmides the son of Glaucon, while on his other side were another of Pericles' sons, Xanthippus, and Philippides the son of Philomelus, and Antimoerus of Mende, the one who's the most highly regarded of Protagoras's pupils and is learning his art in order to be a sophist. The greater part of those who were following along behind listening to what was said appeared to be foreigners—Protagoras brings them along from each of the cities he passes through, casting a spell over them with his voice just like Orpheus, while they trail after him **B** spellbound; and some of the local inhabitants were also in the choral

2 Literally "human beings" (*anthropoi*), but used here as a term of contempt, and echoed by Socrates just below. The word *anthropos* is used with unusual frequency in this dialogue. To a contemporary of Plato, it would have been bound to recall Protagoras's celebrated saying, "a human being is the measure of all things." Protagoras is depicted below (at 328B or 333C, for instance), as unwilling to apply the radical relativism of that epigram to his own status among other human beings; this culminates at 352E.

dance. *I* was especially entertained at seeing how beautifully this chorus was taking care never to get in Protagoras's way or be in front of him, but when he and those beside him turned back, this audience somehow split expertly into two rows in perfect order on the one side and the other, and wheeling around in a circle they always fell back into place in the rear most beautifully.

C Next did I behold, as Homer says,[3] Hippias of Elis, sitting enthroned in the colonnade on the opposite side; sitting around him on benches were Eriximachus the son of Acumenus, Phaedrus the Myrrinusian, Andron the son of Androtion, and some foreigners, both countrymen of his and others. They appeared to be pressing Hippias with certain astronomical questions pertaining to nature and the celestial regions, while he, sitting on his throne, was passing judgment for each of them and going all through their questions.

D And Tantalus as well did I espy, for Prodicus of Ceos was in town too, you know, and he was in a certain room that Hipponicus used before as a storeroom, but now Callias, because of the multitude of people putting up at his place, had emptied it out and made it into a guest room for the foreigners. Prodicus, then, was still lying down, covered up in some sheepskins and blankets, and lots of them, as it appeared. Lying alongside him on couches nearby were Pausanias, the one from Cerameis, and with Pausanias was a youngster, still a **E** teenager, good and beautiful in his nature, I assume, and certainly very beautiful in appearance. I think I heard his name was Agathon, and I wouldn't be surprised if he happened to be Pausanias's sweetheart.[4] So there was this teenaged boy, and both Adeimantuses, the sons of Cepis and Leucolophidas, and some others appeared there as well. But what they were talking about, I was unable to learn from outside, even though I was constantly straining to listen to Prodicus—for he **316A** seems to me to be a man thoroughly wise and godlike—but due to the depth of his voice there was a sort of rumbling sound in the room that made what was said indistinct.

And just at the moment we came in, there entered close behind us Alcibiades, the beautiful one, as you assert and I am persuaded, and also Critias the son of Callaeschrus. So we came in that way, while still taking our time talking about some small matters, and when we'd **B** thoroughly looked into them, we went up to Protagoras, and I said, "Protagoras, we've really made it here to you, Hippocrates here and

3 *Odyssey* XI, 601, as Odysseus surveys the souls in Hades. The reference to Tantalus just below comes from a line in the *Odyssey* a little before this one.

4 The two appear also as a couple in Plato's *Symposium*; Agathon is celebrating winning a prize as a young tragic poet, and Pausanias gives a speech that embodies the conventional opinion of his time about sexual attachments between older and younger men. The last portion of that dialogue also provides some perspective on the relationship between Socrates and Alcibiades, only one of whom thought it fit the conventional pattern.

I!" "Do you want to have a conversation with me alone," he said, "or along with the others as well?" "To us," I said, "it makes no difference; but when you've heard the purpose for which we came, consider it yourself." "And what is the purpose for which you came?" he said. "Hippocrates here is one of the local people, a son of Apollodorus, of a great and well-to-do household, and he himself, in his nature, seems to be a match for his age group. To me it seems that he has a **C** desire to get a good name in the city, and he thinks he'd get this most of all if he associates with you. So now in light of these things, you consider whether you think you ought to discuss them alone with us alone, or along with others."

"You are right to be circumspect[5] on my account, Socrates," he said. "For when a man goes as a foreigner into great cities and persuades the best of the young people in them to abandon the company of others, kinfolk and outsiders, older and younger, to be in his own company because they'll be the best they can be through their association with **D** him himself, it behooves him to be cautious in doing these things. For the jealousies that arise over them are not small, and there are even other sorts of hostilities and intrigues. I claim, though, that the sophistic art is an ancient one, but those men of ancient times who took it up, afraid of the antipathy for it, made a pretense and veiled themselves, in some cases in poetry, as with Homer, Hesiod, and Simonides, in others in mystic rites and oracular pronouncements, as with those surrounding Orpheus and Musaeus. I've noticed some certain ones even use fitness training, like Iccus of Tarentum, and one who's still around today and is no less a sophist, Herodicus of Selymbria, origi- **E** nally a Megarean. And your own Agathocles made music his pretense, though he was a great sophist, as were Pythocleides of Ceos and many others. All of these, as I say, being afraid of jealousy, used these arts as camouflage. But I refuse to be aligned with all these people in this **317A** matter, since I regard them as having failed to accomplish anything they wanted. For they didn't fool the people in their cities who had the power to act, on whose account those pretenses of theirs were made—most people, so to speak, don't notice anything anyway, but just sing whatever tune those others pass on to them. For someone who runs away to be unable to get away, but be conspicuous about it, is a great lack of intelligence in one who even makes the attempt, and **B** it's bound to make people much more hostile. For they regard such a person as being unscrupulous on top of everything else. So I've gone down a road totally opposite to that of those others. I acknowledge that I'm a sophist and that I give people an education, and I take this to be a better precautionary measure than that one, acknowledging

5 The verb means literally "to learn beforehand." It is the basis of the name of the mythical figure Prometheus, "the forethoughtful one." Beginning in 320C, Protagoras tells a story about Prometheus and his brother Epimetheus, "the one who learns his lesson after the fact."

it rather than being in denial. And I've taken other precautions in addition to that one, so as—I say it with a god listening—to suffer
C nothing dire as a result of admitting that I'm a sophist. And yet it's many years now that I'm in the practice of this art, for indeed my sum of years altogether is many—there's not one out of all of you who's of such an age that I could not be his father—so it's much the pleasantest thing for me, if it's something you folks want, to make my discourse on these things right in front of everyone who's in here."

And I—since I suspected that he wanted to show off for Prodicus
D and Hippias, and gloat over the fact that we'd come calling as lovers of his—said, "Then why don't we call Prodicus and Hippias and those with them to come in so they can listen to us?" "Quite so," Protagoras said. "So do you want us to set up for a seminar," Callias said, "so you folks can have your conversation sitting down?" It seemed good to do it that way, and since we were all delighted that we'd be listening to wise men, we pitched in and set up the benches and couches alongside Hippias ourselves, since the benches were over there already;
E and Callias and Alcibiades arrived at the spot supporting Prodicus between the two of them, having got him up on his feet from his couch, bringing those with Prodicus along too.

And when we'd all taken seats together, Protagoras said, "Now that these folks here are also present, Socrates, you might say what you were making mention of to me a little while ago on the youngster's
318A behalf." "The beginning of it for me is just the same as it was just now, Protagoras, and the reason I came. For Hippocrates here happens to be in desire of your company, so he says he'd be glad to find out what he'd get out of it if he associates with you. That's as far as *our* speech went." So taking up from there, Protagoras said, "Young man, it will assuredly be the case for you, if you associate with me, that on the day on which you come into association with me you'll go home having become better, and the same things will happen on the following day, and each day you'll make continual progress for the better."

B And hearing this, I said, "Protagoras, you're saying nothing surprising in this, but just what's likely, since even you, even at your age and as wise as you are, would become better if anyone were to teach you something you happened not to know. But that's not the point; put it this way. If Hippocrates here, having a change of heart all of a sudden, had a desire for the company of that young fellow who's just recently come to town, Zeuxippus of Heraclea, and going to him
C the way he has now come to you, he heard from him these same things he's heard from you, that he'd be better each day he was in his company and keep making progress, and he asked him, 'In what respect exactly do you claim I'll be better, and toward what will I be progressing?' Zeuxippus would tell him in respect to painting. And if he came into the company of Orthagoras the Theban, and heard from him these same things he's heard from you, and asked him toward

what he'd get better day by day by associating with him, he'd say toward fluteplaying. So you tell the young fellow too in the same way, and tell me when I ask you on his behalf, 'If Hippocrates here **D** associates with Protagoras, on the very day he comes into company with him he'll go away having become better, and on each of the other days he'll make progress in the same way toward what, Protagoras, and in connection with what?'"

And Protagoras, after hearing these things from me, said, "You put the question beautifully, Socrates, and I'm delighted to reply to those who ask such beautiful questions. For Hippocrates, in coming to me, will not have the same experience he'd have by coming into the company of some of the other sophists. The others abuse the young terribly. For when they've steered clear of the arts, they drag **E** them back again against their will and shove them into arts, teaching them arithmetic, astronomy, geometry, and music," as he glanced over at Hippias, "but when he comes to me he won't learn a single thing other than what he came about. The thing to be learned is how to make good decisions[6] about his own affairs, so he can run his own household the best way, and about the affairs of his city, so he can **319A** be the most powerful in his city's affairs in both action and speaking." "Am I following your meaning?" I said. "You seem to me to be talking about the political art, and to be promising to make men good citizens." "That, Socrates," he said, "is the very proclamation I'm proclaiming."

"Then it's a beautiful piece of artfulness you've acquired," I said, "if in fact you *have* acquired it. For to you, nothing other than exactly what I think is going to be said. Because, Protagoras, I didn't believe this thing could be taught, but now that you say it is, I don't see how **B** I can disbelieve it. But if I'm to be just, I need to say on what basis I regard it as not being teachable or something that can be provided to human beings by other human beings. For I, like the rest of the Greeks, claim that Athenians are wise. Now when we convene in the assembly, I see that whenever the city needs to act on some measure pertaining to building, the builders are summoned as advisors about matters of building, and whenever something pertains to shipbuilding, it's the shipbuilders, and the same way with all other matters that they regard **C** as being learnable and teachable. But if anyone else, whom they didn't believe was professionally skilled, were to try to give them advice,

6 "How to make good decisions" translates *euboulia*. The four arts Protagoras mentions by contrast form the classical quadrivium, the mathematical studies that were regarded as dealing with the preeminently learnable things, with music and astronomy understood not as practical disciplines but as theoretical studies of the relations among discrete quantities and continuous magnitudes. It is worth noting that Aristotle, in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1142a 11-20), argues that the young can learn mathematics as well as anyone, but lack the experience, and the appreciation of the value of experience, to learn the things *euboulia* rests on; he discusses the latter capacity just after that, in Bk. VI, Chap. 9.

then even if he's a very fine-looking fellow and rich and belongs to a well-born family, they're none the more receptive to him, but jeer and hoot at him until the fellow trying to speak either stands down himself after he's been shouted down, or the guards drag him away or pick him up and carry him off on orders of the presiding officials. So that's the way they get things done on matters they believe to be in the province of art; but whenever something needs to be deliberated
D on that has to do with managing the affairs of the city, the one who stands up and gives them advice about these things may equally well be a carpenter, a blacksmith, or a leatherworker as well, a merchant or a ship's captain, a rich man or a poor one, of good family or no family, and no one casts aspersions at them, as in the previous cases, for not having learned it anywhere or not having anyone who's been his teacher, and then trying to give advice. For it's obvious that they don't regard it as teachable. What's more, it's not just that way with
E the common concerns of the city, but with us, the wisest and best of our citizens are unable to pass on this virtue that they have, since Pericles, the father of these youngsters here, had them educated
320A beautifully and well in all those matters that involve teachers, but in the matters on which he himself is wise, he neither educates them himself nor turns them over to anyone else; they range free the way the sacred cattle graze, just in case they might happen to run across virtue on their own. Or there's Cleinias if you like, the younger brother of this Alcibiades here; his guardian, this same man Pericles, afraid that he might be corrupted by Alcibiades, kept him away from him, and placing him in Ariphon's family, educated him there; before six
B months had passed, Ariphon gave him back to him, because he had no way to deal with him. And I have a great many others to tell you about who are good themselves but never made any of their family members, or anyone else, better. When I pay attention to these things, then, Protagoras, I don't regard virtue as being something teachable. But when I hear you saying these things, I get turned around and assume there's something in what you say, because I regard you as someone who has become experienced in many matters, has learned many things, and has come up with other things on your own. So if
C you have a clearer way to demonstrate to us that virtue is something teachable, don't begrudge it to us but give the demonstration."

"I certainly won't be grudging, Socrates," he said, "but shall I demonstrate it to you folks the way an older man does to younger ones, by telling a story, or by going through an argument?" Many of those sitting near him put in the opinion that he should go through it in whatever way he wanted to. "Well then," he said, "it seems to me a more gracious thing to tell you a story.

D "Once upon a time there were gods, but no races of mortal beings. But when the allotted time came for them to come to be as well, gods forged them within the earth out of a mixture of earth and fire and all

the alloys of fire and earth. And when they were about to lead them toward the light, they assigned Prometheus and Epimetheus to adorn each kind with powers and to distribute them in a fitting manner. But Epimetheus asked Prometheus to let him distribute them himself, 'and when I've made the distribution,' he said, 'you look it over.' And when he'd persuaded him to do it that way, he made the distribution. In distributing them, he attached strength without speed to some, and **E**
adorned the weaker ones with speed; some he gave weapons, but for those with a nature devoid of weapons, he contrived some other power for their safety. To those of them he had confined in smallness, he distributed winged flight or an underground dwelling place, and those he augmented in size, he made safe by that very means; and he **321A**
made the distribution to equal things out for the others in the same way. And he contrived these things in order to take care that no race would disappear.

"And when he'd supplied them with ways to avoid destroying one another, he contrived protection against the seasons sent by Zeus, clothing them in dense hair and tough hides, sufficient to ward off the winter, but also potent against scorching heat, and so that these same things would be their own bedding, already there for them when they go to their lairs, growing on its own on each one. And under the feet **B**
of some he put hooves, of others, tough skin that doesn't bleed. After that he provided for different foods for the different kinds, fodder from the earth for some, fruit from trees for others, and roots for still others; and some kinds there are to which he gave meat from other animals to be their food, but he added the condition that these would be able to bear few offspring, while those consumed by them would give birth to many, making provision for the preservation of the race.

"Now seeing as how Epimetheus was not really very wise at all, it escaped him that he had used up the powers on the irrational kinds, **C**
while the race of humans was still left unadorned by him, and he was at a loss over what to do about it. And while he was stumped, Prometheus comes to him to look over the distribution, and sees that the other animals had a harmonious provision of all things, but the human being was naked, unshod, and without bedding or weapons. But the allotted day was already at hand, on which the human being too had to go out from the earth into the light. So Prometheus, stuck in bafflement over what sort of safety he could come up with for the human being, steals from Hephaestus and Athena their wisdom in the **D**
arts, together with fire—for there was no ingenuity by which anyone could come into the possession or use of it without fire—and in just that way made his gift to the human race. But while the human being got wisdom for his life in this respect, political wisdom he did not get, since that was in the keeping of Zeus. Prometheus could not trespass so far as to enter the citadel that was the dwelling place of Zeus—and what's more, Zeus's guards were fearsome—but as for the dwelling

E shared by Athena and Hephaestus, where they indulged their passionate pursuit of the arts, he got into that without being noticed. And when he'd stolen the fiery art that belonged to Hephaestus and the other sort that belonged to Athena, he gave them to the human being,
322A and from this source there came to the human race an ease of providing for its life. Later though, according to what is said, punishment overtook Prometheus for the theft, all because of Epimetheus.

"And since the human being got a share of what was allotted to the gods, he first of all, through this kinship to the god, was the only one of the animals to believe in gods, and he set his hand to putting up altars and statues of gods. Next, by means of art, he quickly elaborated articulate sound and words, and came up with dwellings, clothing, shoes, bedding, and foods from the earth. At the beginning,
B when they were provided for in just that way, human beings lived in scattered fashion, and there were no cities. So they were killed by wild animals, because they were weaker than they in every respect; and while their art at crafting things was sufficient assistance for them as far as food went, it was deficient when it came to war with wild animals—for they did not yet have the political art, and the art of war is part of that. So they sought to gather their forces and keep safe by founding cities. But any time when they did gather, they did injustice to one another as a result of not having the political art, and so they dispersed again and were dying off.

C "So then Zeus, fearing for our race, lest it might all die out, sends Hermes to bring humans a sense of shame and of a right way, so there could be orderly behavior in cities and bonds of friendship to unite people. And Hermes asks Zeus in what manner he should give humans a sense of the right and of shame. 'Do I distribute these the same way the arts were distributed? They were distributed like this: one person with the medical art was enough for many private people, as were the rest of those with professional skills. Do I put a sense of
D the right and of shame in humans in that way too, or do I pass them out to them all?' 'To them all,' said Zeus, 'and let everyone get a share, because cities could not come into being if few were to have a share the way they do with the other arts. And even make it a law from me to put to death anyone incapable of sharing in a sense of shame and of the right, as a plague on a city.'

"So, Socrates, in this way and for these reasons everyone else, as well as the Athenians, when there's a discussion about virtues pertaining to building or to any other kind of craftsmanship, believes that few
E people have a share in giving advice, and if anyone outside of those few does give advice, they don't permit it, as you say—and that's
323A reasonable, as I say—but when they get to advice on political virtue, which must all go the way of justice and moderation, it's reasonable for them to permit every man to give it, since it's the fitting thing for

everyone to have a share of this sort of virtue, or else there would be no cities. This, Socrates, is the cause of the matter.

"And so you won't think you're being misled into thinking that all people in actual fact regard all men as sharing in justice and the rest of political virtue, take this further point as proof positive: with other sorts of virtue, as you say, if anyone claims to be a good fluteplayer, or to be good at any other art whatever, when he isn't, people will either laugh at him or get angry, and his family will go to him and warn him that he's doing something crazy, but with justice and the rest of political virtue, even when they know that someone is unjust, if that person himself tells the truth on himself in front of a lot of people, what they would have regarded as sane moderation in the previous case—telling the truth—they regard here as craziness. They declare that all people have to claim to be just, whether they are or not, and that anyone would be crazy not to make that pretense, since they think no one at all could possibly have no share of justice in one way or another, or he wouldn't be included in the human race. **B** **C**

"As to the fact, then, that it's a reasonable thing for people to accept every man as an advisor on this sort of virtue, because they regard everyone as having a share of it, that's what I have to say. Next after this, I'll try to demonstrate to you that they regard this virtue as something that doesn't come by nature or pop up on its own, but as a teachable thing that becomes present in anyone it does become present in as a result of painstaking effort. For with all those evils people regard one another as having by nature or by chance, no one gets worked up at those who have them, or scolds or lectures or disciplines them to make them not be that way; they just pity them. Who would be so senseless as to try to do any of those things with people who are, say, ugly or small or weak? For with those things, I presume they know that they come to people by nature or by chance, the beautiful things and their opposites. But with all those good things they believe come to human beings by effort and training and teaching, if anyone doesn't have them but has the bad things that are their opposites, here, for these, is where flare-ups of feeling and disciplinary measures and scoldings come in. Injustice is one of these, and so is impiety, and everything, in short, that's opposed to political virtue. It's on that score that everyone gets upset with and scolds everyone, obviously on the grounds that it's something one can get by effort and learning. **D** **E** **324A**

"For if you take the trouble to reflect on discipline, Socrates, and what power it can possibly exert on unjust people, that by itself will teach you that human beings *think* virtue can be imposed. For no one who has any sense disciplines the unjust for fact that they committed injustice and for the sake of that alone, no one who's not taking retribution irrationally like a wild animal. Someone who's trying to discipline another person with rationality doesn't take retribution **B**

for the sake of the bygone act of injustice—for he can't make what's been done be undone—but for the sake of the future, so that neither that person himself nor anyone else who sees him being punished will commit injustice again. And someone who has such a thought thinks virtue is obtained by education; he's imposing discipline for the sake of a deterrent, at any rate. So everyone holds this opinion
C who engages in retribution privately or in public. The rest of mankind take retribution and impose discipline on those they believe commit injustice, and not least your fellow citizens the Athenians. So by this argument, the Athenians too are among those who regard virtue as something that can be imposed and taught. That, then, it's reasonable for your fellow citizens to permit a blacksmith and a leatherworker to give advice on matters of civic concern, and that they regard virtue as teachable and able to be imposed, has been sufficiently demonstrated
D to you Socrates, the way it appears to me, anyway.

"What still remains, then, is the puzzlement that leaves you puzzled about good men: why in the world good men have their sons taught all the other things that are in the scope of teachers, and make them wise, but don't make them better than anyone else in that sort of virtue by which they themselves are good. About this, Socrates, I won't tell you a story any more, but give an argument.

"Just consider this: is there or is there not some one thing that it's
E necessary for all citizens to share in if there's going to be a city? For this puzzlement that puzzles you has its resolution here and nowhere else. For if there is, and this one thing is not carpentry or blacksmith-
325A ing or pottery but justice and moderation and being pious, and that one very thing to which, taken together, I apply the name of a man's virtue—if this is what everyone needs to share in, and it's with this that every man needs to act if there's anything else he also wants to learn or do, and not act without this, and if one needs to teach and discipline anyone who does not have a share in this, whether it's a child, a man, or a woman, until the one who's disciplined becomes a better person, but one needs to cast out of the cities or put to death
B anyone who, when disciplined and taught, doesn't respond, as being incurable—if that's how it is, and if, even though it's that way by nature, good men teach their sons everything else but not this, look at what a surprising way of going about things good people get themselves into. For we've demonstrated that they regard it as something teachable both in private and in public, but while it is teachable and can be instilled by attentive care, they then teach their sons all the other things, for which there is no death penalty if they don't know them, but that thing for which there is a penalty of death or exile for
C their children if they don't learn it or have it instilled in them to the point of virtue, and not only death but confiscation of property and, to put it all in one phrase, the overthrow of households—this they don't teach and don't exert every effort over? One would have to assume

they do, Socrates. Starting with them as small children and for as long as they live, they both teach and admonish them. As soon as one of them understands what's said, his nurse, his mother, his tutor, and his father himself strive mightily for this, that the child be most excellent, **D** teaching and pointing out about every deed and word that one is just and another unjust, that this is beautiful and that's shameful, this is pious and that's impious, that one does some things and does not do others. And it may be that he's persuaded willingly, but if not, then just as with wood that's warped and bent, they straighten him out with threats and beatings. And afterward, when they send them off to teachers, they instruct them to take much greater pains that their **E** children be in good order than that their writing or harp-playing be that way, and their teachers do take these pains, and when in turn the children have learned written words and are on the point of understanding written things just as well as they understood spoken ones before, they set before them on their desks works of good poets to read and compel them to learn these by heart; in them are contained **326A** lots of admonitions and lots of detailed descriptions and praises of and tributes to good men of ancient times, so that the child will be eager to imitate them and will long to become that kind of person. And on their side, the harp teachers too take pains in other similar ways over moderation and that the youngsters don't behave badly in any way, and in addition to that, once they've learned to play the harp, they teach them the works of other good poets who compose songs, and setting these to the music of the harp, they compel the **B** children to absorb the rhythms and harmonies into their souls so as to make them more civilized, and so that, by becoming more in tune with rhythm and harmony, they'll be well fitted to speak and to act; for the whole life of a human being needs to be rhythmic and harmonious to be in good condition. Still more, on top of that, they send them to an athletic trainer so they'll have better bodies in service of their thinking once *it*'s in a fit condition, and they won't be forced to **C** be cowards, both in war and other actions, because of the shoddiness of their bodies. The most powerful people do these things the most—and it's the richest people who are the most powerful—and their sons start going regularly to teachers at the earliest age and are freed from them the latest. And when they are set free from teachers, the city in turn compels them to learn the laws and live by them as patterns, so **D** they won't act randomly at the prompting of their own whims, but in literally the same way that writing teachers give those children who aren't yet skilled at writing a tablet with letters they've already traced out with a stylus, and make them write along the guiding lines, so too the city, having traced out the laws found out by good lawgivers of earlier times, compels them to rule and be ruled along these lines, and disciplines whoever strays outside them. And the name for this disciplinary process among you, and in many other places, is 'correc- **E**

tions,' on the grounds that judicial punishment produces rectitude. So when there is so much painstaking care about virtue in private and in public, are you wondering and puzzled, Socrates, whether virtue is something teachable? But there shouldn't be any wonder in that; it would be much more to be wondered at if it were not teachable.

"So why is it that many sons of good fathers turn out to be worthless people? Learn this now. For it's no wonder, if indeed I was speak-
327A ing the truth in my earlier remarks, that in this business of virtue, if there's going to be a city, it's required that no one go about it as an amateur. For if it's the way I say—and of all things, *it* most assuredly *is*—then consider any other pursuit or learnable thing whatever of your choice. If it were not possible for there to be a city unless all of us were fluteplayers, with whatever sort of capacity each of us had, and if everyone taught this to everyone in private and in public, and reprimanded anyone who didn't play the flute beautifully, and was unstinting about this, just as now no one makes any secret about what's
B just and lawful or begrudges it to anyone the way people do with the lore of other arts—because, I presume, justice and virtue toward one another are profitable to us, and for that reason everyone eagerly tells and teaches everyone what's just and lawful. So if in fluteplaying too we had such a total and unstinting eagerness to teach one another, do you imagine, Socrates," he said, "that the sons of good fluteplayers would become good fluteplayers one bit more than the sons of lousy fluteplayers would? I rather think not, but whosever son happened to have been born with the greatest natural talent for fluteplaying,
C he's the one who'd grow in distinction, while whosever son was untalented would be unknown to fame. An indifferent fluteplayer would often come from a good one, and a good one often from an indifferent one, but they'd all certainly be competent fluteplayers as compared with ordinary people who had no grasp of fluteplaying. In the same way now too, think of anyone who appears to you as the most unjust human being of those raised among laws and human society as himself being just, and a skilled practioner in this matter,
D if one had to judge him against humans who have no education, no courts, no laws, and no necessity at all incessantly compelling them to care about virtue; they'd be some sort of savages, just like those the poet Pherecrates gave direction for last year in the Lenaean festival. Why if you came among people of such a kind as the haters of the human race in that chorus were, you'd be delighted if you ran into Eurybatus and Phrynondas, and you'd cry out in yearning for the
E viciousness that's found among people here.

"But the way things are, you're spoiled, Socrates; because everyone is a teacher of virtue to the extent each has the power to be, it appears to you that no one is. Well the same way as if you were looking for
328A someone who's a teacher of Greek, there wouldn't appear to be even one, I don't imagine, if you were looking for someone who'd teach

the sons of our handicraftsmen the very same arts that they'd already learned from their fathers, to the extent the father and his friends who shared the same art had the power, and wanted to find someone who could still teach them, I don't imagine it would be easy, Socrates, for a teacher for *them* to make an appearance, but quite easy in the case of one for inexperienced people, and that's the way it is with virtue and everything else. But if there's anyone who surpasses us even a little bit in leading people to virtue, that's something to be delighted **B** about. And it's exactly in this category that I believe myself to be, someone who is better than other human beings at helping people come toward the beautiful and good, and I believe I'm worth the fee I charge and still more than that, so much so that it seems that way even to the student himself. And for these reasons, I've adopted this sort of procedure for charging the fee: whenever anyone learns from me, he pays over the amount of money that I charge if he wants to, but if **C** not, he goes into a temple and takes an oath as to how much he takes the things he's learned to be worth, and puts down that amount.

"Such as it is, then, Socrates," he said, "I've given you both a story and an argument, to the effect that virtue is something teachable and the Athenians regard it so, and that there's nothing surprising about it when the sons of good fathers turn out to be indifferent people and those of indifferent fathers turn out to be good, since even the sons of Polycleitus, who are the same age as Paralus and Xanthippus here, are not at all comparable to their father, as is true of other sons of other artisans. But these fellows here don't deserve to have that charge made **D** against them yet; there's still hope for them. They're young."

When Protagoras had made such a display of such a length, he broke off his speech. And for a long time I was spellbound, still gazing at him as if he was going to say something, and longing to hear it. But when I realized that he must be well and truly finished, I somehow, with an effort, pulled myself together, in a manner of speaking, and looking over at Hippocrates, I said, "Son of Apollodorus, how grateful I am to you for having prevailed on me to come here. For I consider it a great favor to have heard what I've heard from Protagoras. For in **E** all the time before this, I used to think it was not by any human effort that good people become good, but now I'm persuaded. Except there's one little thing standing in my way, which obviously Protagoras will easily explain away, since he's explained so many of these things as well. For if one were go to any of the public speakers too about these same matters, one would probably hear speeches just like this from **329A** either Pericles or any of the others who are competent at speaking. But if one were to press any of them with any question, then like books they have no answer to give and no question to ask themselves; if anyone asks them even a tiny question about a point they've mentioned, then the same way cymbals that have been struck go on sounding for a long time and keep stretching it out unless someone puts a hand

B on them, so too the rhetorical speakers, when they've been asked a tiny question, draw out a long-distance speech. But Protagoras here, while he's competent at making long and beautiful speeches, as they themselves show, is also well able to answer with brevity when he's asked a question, and to wait for and accept the answer when he asks a question, which are gifts bestowed on few people.

"Now then, Protagoras, I'm in need of one little thing in order to have it all, if you would answer me this. You claim virtue is teachable, and if I can be persuaded of this by anyone else among human beings, C I'll be persuaded by you But just satisfy my soul on this point that I was wondering about while you were speaking. You were saying that Zeus had sent justice and a sense of shame to human beings, and then again in many places in your arguments, justice and moderation and piety and all those things were spoken of by you as if taken together they were some one thing, virtue. So go over these same things for me in a precise way in an argument, as to whether virtue is some one thing, and justice, moderation, and piety are parts of it, or these things D which I just now spoke of are all names for the same thing, which is one. That's the thing I'm still yearning for."

"But that's easy to answer, Socrates," he said; "the things you're asking about are parts of virtue, which is one thing." "Are they parts in the same way as the parts of a face," I said, "the mouth and nose and eyes and ears, or like parts of gold, where one is no different from another, between themselves or in relation to the whole, other than in E being big or small?" "It appears to me to be the first way, Socrates, the same way the parts of a face are related to the face as a whole." "So then do human beings get their share of these parts of virtue," I said, "with some having one, others having another, or is it necessary that if anyone gets one he has them all?" "By no means," he said, "since many people are courageous but unjust, and many too are just but not 330A wise." "So these are also parts of virtue," I said, "wisdom and courage?" "They most of all, without a doubt," he said, "and wisdom is certainly the greatest of the parts." "And each of them is one thing," I said, "and another is another thing?" "Yes." "And does each of them have its own particular power? Just as, with the parts of a face, an eye is not the same sort of thing as the ears, and its power is not the same, and neither is any of the others the same sort of thing as a different one, either in its power or in any other way, is that how it is with the parts of virtue too, that there is no one part that's the same sort of thing as B another, in itself or in its power? Isn't it obviously exactly that way, if indeed it's like its model?" "It's just that way, Socrates," he said. And I said, "Therefore no other one of the parts of virtue is the same sort of thing as knowledge, or the same sort of thing as justice, or the same sort of thing as courage, or the same sort of thing as moderation, or the same sort of thing as piety." He said no.

"Come then," I said, "let's examine in common what sort of thing each of them is. First, let's consider this kind of point: is justice a thing **C** or not a thing at all? It seems to me it is, but how does it seem to you?" "To me too," he said. "Well then, if someone were to ask me and you both, 'Hey Protagoras and Socrates, tell me you two, this thing, as you folks were just calling it, justice, is this itself just or unjust?' I'd answer him that it's just, but how would you cast your vote? The same as mine or different?" "The same," he said. "Justice, therefore, is such a thing as to be just, is what I'd claim in answer to the one who **D** asked the question. And how about you?" "Yes," he said. "And if he were to ask us next, 'And you folks claim that piety is something?' I imagine we'd claim it is." "Yes," he said. "'And you claim this too is a thing?' Would we claim it is, or not?" He agreed with this too. "'And do you folks claim that this thing itself is of such a nature as to be impious or to be pious?' I'd be offended at the one asking the question," I said, "and I'd say 'Watch what you say, mister. It would sure be hard for anything else to be pious, if piety itself isn't going to **E** be pious.' What about you? Wouldn't you answer the same way?" "Very much so," he said.

"And if, in questioning us, he were to say next, 'Then what did you folks mean by what you were saying a little while ago? Didn't I hear you correctly? You folks seemed to me to be claiming that parts of virtue were related to one another in such a way that one of them is not the same sort of thing as another.' For my part, I'd say 'You heard the rest of it correctly, but you misheard if you think I said that too. Protagoras here was the one giving those answers; I was just asking. **331A** So if he says, 'Is this man telling the truth, Protagoras? You claim that one part of virtue is not the same sort of thing as another part? This is your statement?' what would you answer him?" "It would be necessary for me to agree, Socrates," he said.

"Then having agreed to that, Protagoras, what would we answer him if he went on to ask us, 'Therefore piety is a thing that's not of such a sort to be just, and justice is not of such a sort to be pious, but *not* pious? Is it the case then that piety is of such a sort as to be not just but unjust, and justice impious?' What answer will we give him? **B** I myself, on my own behalf, anyway, would claim that justice is pious and piety is just. And I'd give these same answers on your behalf too, if you allow me to, because justness is either the same thing as piety or as similar to it as possible, and justice most of all things is like piety, and piety most of all things like justice. But see whether you object to my giving the answer or whether it seems that way to you too in common with me." "It doesn't seem to me to be quite so simple, Socrates, that I could agree justice is something pious and piety is **C** something just; there seems to me to be something different in it. But what difference does that make?" he said. "If you want to, let justice be pious and piety be just for us." "That's not good enough for me,"

I said. "I have no use for this 'if you want to' and 'if it seems that way to you'; what I need to have cross-examined is me and you. And I say this 'me and you' in the belief that the best way for the argument to
D be cross-examined is if one takes the 'if' out of it."

"Well sure," he said, "justice has some similarity to piety, because anything whatever is similar to anything whatever in one way or another. White is similar to black in a certain respect, and hard to soft, and all the other things that seem to be totally opposite to one another. And the things we were claiming before have different powers, and that one is not the same sort of thing as another, the parts of a face, in one way or another they're also similar and one *is* the same sort of
E thing as another. So you could cross-examine in that way even about them, if you wanted to, since all things have similarities to one another. But it's not a just thing to call things that have some similarity 'similar' even when the similarity they have is very small, or to call things that have some dissimilarity 'dissimilar'." And I was surprised, and said to him, "That's the way it seems to you the just and the pious are related to each other, that they have some little similarity between them?"
332A "That's not the way it is at all," he said, "but it's surely not the way you seem to me to think it is either."

"Well," I said, "since you seem to me to be irritated about this, let's let it go and examine this other thing you were saying. There's something you call a lack of good sense?" He said there was. "And isn't wisdom the complete opposite of this thing?" "It seems so to me," he said. "And whenever human beings act rightly and advantageously, does it seem to you that they are then being moderate in so acting or
B the opposite?" "Being moderate," he said. "And they're moderate by means of moderation?" "Necessarily." "And those who act in a way that's not right act without good sense, and in so acting are not being moderate?" "It seems so to me as well," he said.[7] "Therefore acting without good sense is the opposite of acting moderately?" He said it was. "And things done without good sense are done with a lack of good sense, while things done moderately are done with moderation?" He agreed. "And if anything is done with strength, it's done strongly, if with weakness, weakly?" It seemed so to him. "And if anything
C is done with speed, speedily, if with slowness, slowly?" He said so. "And if anything is done in a way that's the same, it's done by the same power, if in a way that's opposite, by the opposite power?" He joined in saying that.

"Come then," I said, "is there something beautiful?" He went along with that. "Is there anything opposite to this exept the ugly?" "There isn't." "What about this? Is there something good?" "There is." "Is there anything opposite to this except the bad?" "There isn't." "What about this? Is there something high-pitched in sound?" He said

7 The word for "a lack of good sense" (*aphrosunê*) is used as the opposite of wisdom (*sophia*), but formed as the opposite of moderation (*sophrosunê*).

there was. "And there isn't anything opposite to this except what's low-pitched?" He said there wasn't. "And for each one of the opposites," I said, "is there only one opposite and not many?" He joined in agreement. "Come on then," I said, "let's gather up the things agreed **D**
to by us. We're agreed that one thing is opposite to one thing only and not more?" "We're agreed." "And what's done in an opposite way is done by opposite powers?" He said it was. "And we're agreed that something done without good sense is done in an opposite way to something done moderately?" He said we were. "And something done moderately is done with moderation, while something done without good sense is done with a lack of good sense?" He went along **E**
with that. "And if it's done in an opposite way, it would be done by an opposite power?" "Yes." "And the one is done with moderation, the other by a lack of good sense?" "Yes." "In opposite ways?" "Certainly." "And accordingly by powers that are opposites?" "Yes." "Is a lack of good sense the opposite of moderation?" "It appears so." "Now do you remember that it was agreed by us in the earlier discussion that a lack of good sense is the opposite of wisdom?" He joined in agreement. "But one thing is opposite to one thing only?" **333A**
"I'd say so."

"Then which of our statements are we going to turn loose, Protagoras? One thing's being opposite to one thing only, or the one in which it was said that moderation is something different from wisdom, while each one is a part of virtue, in addition to being different and dissimilar, both they themselves and their powers, just like the parts of a face? Which of the two are we going to turn loose? For these statements, when stated together, don't sound very musical, since they don't sing the same tune and aren't in harmony with each other. How *could* they sing the same tune if it's necessary for one thing to be opposite to one thing only, and not more, while to a lack **B**
of good sense, which is one thing, wisdom and then again moderation appear to be opposite? Is that the situation, Protagoras," I said, "or is it in any way different?" He agreed, though very unwillingly. "So would moderation and wisdom be one thing? Then too, earlier on, it appeared manifest to us that justice and piety are pretty much the same thing. So come on, Protagoras," I said, "let's not fade out, but keep on examining the remaining cases too. Does it seem to you that any human being is moderate in committing injustice, whatever **C**
injustice he commits?" "*I'*d be ashamed to agree to that, Socrates," he said, "although many human beings certainly say so." "Well shall I make the argument in regard to them," I said, "or in regard to you?" "If you want to," he said, "discuss it with regard to that first statement, the one most people make." "It doesn't make any difference to me, so long as you give the answers, whether or not those things seem that way to you. For it's the argument that I'll be testing primarily,

though it turns out that I the questioner as well as the answerer will be tested too."

D Now at first Protagoras put on a pretty show of reluctance for us, for he alleged that the argument was too distasteful, but eventually he gave way, agreeing to answer. "Come on then," I said, "and answer me from the beginning. Does it seem to you that some people are moderate in committing injustice?" "Let it be so," he said. "And by being moderate, do you mean using good sense?" He said he did. "And using good sense is making good decisions about whatever injustices they commit?" "Let it be so," he said. "And is that if they do well by committing injustice, or if they do badly?" "If they do well." "And you say that certain things are good?" "I say that." "And are those things
E good," I said, "that are advantageous to human beings?" "Yes, by Zeus!" he said, "and even when they're not advantageous to human beings, *I* still call them good!" And at this point Protagoras seemed to me to be spoiling for a fight and armed and ready for answering. So since I saw that he was in such a state, I was cautious and put my question gently. "Which way do you mean it, Protagoras," I said:
334A "things that are advantageous to no human being or things that aren't advantageous at all? And are you calling things of *that* sort good?"

"Not at all," he said. "But *I* know lots of good things that are of no advantage to human beings, foods and drinks and drugs and ten thousand other things, and others that are advantageous; I know some that are neither one way nor the other for humans, but are for horses, others only for cattle, and others for dogs, and some for none of these but for trees, and some that are good for the roots of trees but
B bad for the buds—such as manure, which is good for the roots of all plants when it's spread on them, but in case you might feel a desire to throw it on the shoots and young branches, it kills all of *them*. And olive oil, although it's thoroughly bad for all plants, and most injurious to the hair of the rest of the animals other than that of the human being, is a boon to human hair and to the rest of the body. So varied and multifarious a thing is the good that here is something that's
C good for the outside of the human body but for its insides, this same thing is the worst, and hence all doctors forbid people in a weakened condition to use olive oil, other than the smallest possible amount, on the things they're going to eat, just enough to subdue any unsavoriness in their foods and sauces that might make its way to their senses through the nostrils."

When he said this, those present broke into applause as though he'd spoken well, and I said, "Protagoras, I happen to be a forgetful
D sort of human being, and if anyone speaks to me at length, I lose track of what the discussion is about. Now if I happened to be hard of hearing, you'd think it necessary, if you were going to have a conversation with me, to speak louder than you would to other people, so in the same way now too, since you've happened across someone who's apt

to forget things, cut your answers up into pieces for me and make them shorter, if I'm to follow you." "Well *how* are you telling me to give short answers? Should I give answers shorter than they need to be, to suit you?" he said. "Not at all," I said. "However long they need to be, then?" he said. "Yes," I said. "However long it seems to me **E** they need to be answered, that's how long I should make the answers for you, or however long it seems to you?" "I've heard, anyway," I said, "that you have the ability yourself, and that you're able to teach someone else, to speak at length when you want to, so much so that the speech never runs out, or else to speak about the same things in such brief terms that no one could say it in fewer words. So if you're **335A** going to have a conversation with me, use this other style for me, the brief-speaking style." "Socrates," he said, "I've gotten into competition in speeches with a lot of human beings by now, and if I had done what you're telling me to, that I should hold the conversation in the way the rival speaker told me to hold it, I would not have made a better appearance than anyone, and the name of Protagoras would not have come into prominence among the Greeks."

Now I knew that he wasn't satisfied with himself about his earlier answers, and that as far as he was concerned he wouldn't be willing **B** to have a conversation in which he answered questions, so I no longer considered it any business of mine to be present in those gatherings, and I said, "I'll tell you, Protagoras, I'm uncomfortable too about having our gathering go in a direction contrary to what seems good to you, but when you want to have a conversation in a manner that I have the power to follow, then I'll have a conversation with you. For you, as people say about you and you yourself declare, are able to conduct a gathering in either lengthy speech or brief speech—because **C** you're wise—but I'm powerless for those long ones, even though I might wish to have that ability. It would have behooved you to go along with us, since you have the power for both ways, so the gathering could have come to pass. But now, since you're unwilling, and I have something to attend to and won't be able to stay with you while you while you draw out long speeches—there's someplace I have to get to—I'm going, though it would probably not be unpleasant to listen to you on these matters too."

While I was saying these things, I started to stand up as if to go away, and as I was getting up, Callias clutched my hand with his right hand and grabbed this shabby cloak of mine with his left, and **D** said, "We won't let you go, Socrates, because our discussions won't be the same if you leave. I beg you to stay with us, since there's no one I'd get more pleasure out of listening to than you and Protagoras having a conversation. So do us all a favor." I was standing by now, as if to make my exit, and I said, "Son of Hipponicus, I'm constantly in admiration of your love for philosophy, but especially now I have **E** praise and love for it, so I'd be willing to do you this favor if you were

asking for things in my power. But in the present case, it's just as if you were asking me to keep up with Crison, the sprinter from Himera, in his prime, or to run a race against one of the long-distance runners
336A or all-day racers and keep pace; I'd tell you that I ask it of myself much more than you could to follow the footsteps of these runners, but I just don't have the power to. But if there's some need to have the spectacle of Crison and me running in the same race, ask him to make the accomodation, for while I have no power to run swiftly, he does have the power to run slowly. So if you have a desire to listen to Protagoras and me, ask him to give answers now in the same way he was giving them to me at first, with short replies to the very things
B that are asked. Otherwise, what form of conversational exchanges will there be? Because *I*, at any rate, thought getting together and having a conversation with one another, and holding forth in front of a crowd, were two different things."

"But don't you see Socrates," he said, "that Protagoras seems to be saying what's only just in considering it right for him to have the liberty of conversing the way he wants, and you in turn in whatever way you might want."

Then Alcibiades interjected, "You're committing a fallacy,[8] Callias. Socrates here admits that there's no way for him to participate in lengthy speaking, and he gives way to Protagoras on that, but in
C his ability at having a conversation, and his knowing how to handle the give and take of argument, I'd be surprised if he gives way to anyone among human beings. So if Protagoras also admits that he's inferior to Socrates at having a conversation, Socrates is content to accept that. But if claims otherwise, let him *have* a conversation by asking and answering questions, not by drawing out a long speech in response to each thing that's asked, batting aside the arguments
D and being unwilling to give an explanation, but just going on and on until most of the listeners have forgotten what the question was about, although I promise you *Socrates* won't forget, no matter how playful he might be and claim he's forgetful. So what Socrates is saying seems more fair to me: each of them should let his own judgment appear right out in the open."

After Alcibiades, I believe it was Critias who spoke: "Prodicus and
E Hippias, Callias seems to me to be very much on Protagoras' side, and Alcibiades is always eager for a quarrel about whatever he's stirring up, but there's no need for *us* to get into a quarrel with either Socrates or Protagoras; we should jointly beg them both not to break up our gathering midway through."

337A When he said that, Prodicus said, "You seem to me to be making a beautiful point, Critias, for it behooves those who find themselves

8 Literally, "you're not speaking beautifully," but the effect of Alcibiades' intervention depends in part on the playful tone of *"ou kalôs…ô Kallia,"* and the translation attempts to catch something of its sound.

present at discussions such as these to be listeners to the pair of interlocutors jointly, but not equally—for these are not the same. One ought to listen jointly to both together, but not give an equal hearing to each, but more to the more wise and less to the less wise. And for my part, Protagoras and Socrates, I consider it fitting for you to get together and dispute, but not quarrel, with each other about the **B** arguments—for friends dispute with friends and do so with goodwill, but adversaries and enemies quarrel with each other—and in such a manner our gathering would come to be most beautiful. For in that manner you the speakers would be most respected, not just praised, by us the listeners—for the feeling of respect is in the souls of the listeners without deception, but the giving of praise is often in the words of prevaricators contrary to their opinion—and we the listeners in turn **C** would in that way be the most appreciative, not just pleased—for one is appreciative when he learns something and gains some good sense in his thinking power itself, but one is pleased when he eats something or undergoes some other pleasure exclusively in his body."

As Prodicus said these things, quite a number of those present accepted them, and next after Prodicus, the wise Hippias spoke, and said, "Men, I regard you who are present here as kinsmen, close associates, and fellow citizens all—by nature, not by law. For like **D** is kin to like by nature, while law is a tyrant over humankind, and does violence in many ways that go against nature—so I regard it as shameful that we, having knowledge of the nature of things, being the wisest of the Greeks, gathered together now for this very reason in the very sanctuary of wisdom of Greece and in this the greatest household in that very city, and the house most favored by fortune, and in spite of this we give no appearance of anything worthy of the **E** worth we represent, but squabble with one another like human beings of the lowest sort. So my advice to you, Protagoras and Socrates, and I beg you to take it, is that you come together on a compromise on such terms as we work out as arbiters. Don't demand that precise **338A** form of conversational exchanges that goes back and forth in such brief responses, if that's not pleasing to Protagoras, but ease up and give the speeches looser reins, so they might give us an appearance of greater grandeur and elegance; and Protagoras for his part shouldn't let out all his sails and launch himself into the wind, breaking out onto the high sea of speeches and losing sight of land. Both must strike a happy medium. Do this then, and be persuaded by me to choose someone to be gavel-holder, chairman-in-charge, and presiding officer, who'll keep watch for you for a moderate length in the speeches **B** on each side."

These things were to the liking of those present, and everyone approved them; Callias refused to let me go, and asked me to choose a chairman. So I said it would be shameful to choose someone to hand out prizes for the speeches, "since the one chosen will either be our

inferior, and it wouldn't be right for an inferior to be in charge of his betters, or an equal, and that wouldn't be right either, because our
C equal will do things the same way we would, so there'll be no point in his being chosen. Well, then, say you choose someone better than we are. The truth of it is, I imagine, you have no power to choose anyone wiser than Protagoras here, and if you choose someone who isn't better and say that he is, that would even bring shame on this man, to pick someone to be in charge of him as though he were an ordinary human being, though if it were just for me I wouldn't care at all. But here's what I'm willing to do, so we can have the gathering and discussions
D you're all so eager for. If Protagoras doesn't want to give answers, let him ask questions, and I'll give the answers, while at the same time I'll be trying to show him how I claim someone answering questions ought to answer them. And when I've answered as many questions as he wants to ask, let him give me back his account of the matter in similar fashion. Then if he doesn't seem to be eager to give a direct answer to the very thing that was asked, you folks and I in common will require of him exactly what you're requiring of me: not to spoil
E the gathering. And for this purpose there's no need for there to be one chairman, but all of you in common will be in charge." Everyone seemed resolved that this was the way it ought to be done. And while Protagoras was not entirely willing, he was nevertheless compelled to agree to ask questions, and, once he'd asked enough, to give an account in return in short answers.

So he started asking in something like the following way. "In *my* opinion, Socrates," he said, "the most important part of an eduction
339A for a man is to be formidable in the matter of verses; that is, to be able to understand which of the things said by the poets are composed rightly and which not, and to know how to distinguish them and give an account of them when questions come up. And now in particular, the question will concern the very thing you and I are now having our conversation about, namely virtue, but carried over into poetry; it will differ to that extent only. Now Simonides says somewhere, to
B Scopas, the son of Creon of Thessaly, that

> Ah, but it's hard in truth for a man to become good,
> Built squarely in hands, feet, and mind, beyond reproach.

Do you know this ode, or shall I go through the whole thing?" And I said, "There's no need; I know it, and it so happens I've paid quite a lot of attention to that ode."

"Well said," he said. "So does it seem beautifully and rightly composed to you or not?" "Very beautifully and rightly," I said. "And does it seem to you that something has been beautifully composed if the poet himself contradicts himself?" "Not beautifully," I said.
C "Well take a better look at it," he said. "My good man, I've examined

it well enough." "Then you know that as the ode goes on, he says at one point,

> That saying of Pittacus doesn't seem to me well-tuned,
> Spoken though it was by a wise mortal: hard, he says, to be good.

Do you notice that this same person is saying both these things and those previous ones?" "I know," I said. "And does it seem to you," he said, "that the latter are in agreement with the former?" "It appears so to me," I said, though at the same time I was afraid he might have a point; "but doesn't it appear that way to you?" "Why, how could the very person who's saying both these things appear to be in agree- **D**
ment with himself, when he himself first sets it down that it's hard in truth for a man to become good, but then, when he gets a little farther along in his poem, forgets and blames Pittacus for saying the same things as himself, that it's hard to be good, and refuses to accept from him the very things said by himself? Yet any time he casts blame on someone who says the same things he does, it's obvious that he's also blaming himself, so that either in the earlier place or the later one he's not speaking rightly."

When he said these things, he got a round of applause and praise from many of the listeners. And at first, just as if I'd taken a punch from **E**
a good boxer, my sight dimmed and my head spun from these things he'd said and from the roar of approval from the others. Then—and to tell you the truth, it was just to get myself some time for considering what the poet meant—I turned toward Prodicus, and calling to him I said, "Prodicus, Simonides is *your* fellow citizen, you know; in justice, **340A**
you're the one to come to the man's defense, so I think I'm going to call upon you. It's the same way Homer says Scamander, when he was under siege from Achilles, called upon Simois, saying

> Dear brother, let both of us together hold back the strength of the man.

I call upon you now, that we not stand by and let Protagoras leave Simonides overthrown. For setting Simonides back on his feet especially requires your Muse-inspired artistry, by which you differentiate wishing and desiring as not being the same, and make the many **B**
beautiful distinctions you were just now speaking of. And consider now whether it seems to you too the same way it seems to me, since it doesn't *appear* that Simonides himself is contradicting himself. Now you, Prodicus, begin by letting your judgment appear right out in the open: do becoming and being seem to you to be the same or different?" "Different, by Zeus!" Prodicus said. "And in those first lines," I said, "doesn't Simonides let his own judgment appear in the open,

C that it would be a hard thing for a man to become good in truth?" "What you say is true," Prodicus said. "And as for Pittacus," I said, "he blames him not for saying the same thing as himself, as Protagoras assumes, but something different. For that's not what Pittacus said was hard, 'becoming good,' the way Simonides did, but 'being good.' But they're not the same thing, Protagoras, as Prodicus here claims, being and becoming. And if being isn't the same thing as becoming,
D Simonides himself isn't contradicting himself. And Prodicus here, and many others as well, would probably claim, in accord with Hesiod, that becoming good is a hard thing,

> For before virtue, the gods have placed sweat,

but when

> One reaches its summit, then it's easy going,
> Hard though it was to attain."

Then Prodicus, when he'd heard these things, praised me, but Protagoras said, "Your way of setting Simonides back on his feet has a greater error in it than the one you want to set right, Socrates." And
E I said, "Then that's a bad job by me, it seems, Protagoras, and I'm a ridiculous doctor; I make the disease worse by treating it." "That's just the way it is," he said. "How so?" I said. "It would be a great lack of intelligence on the part of the poet," he said, "if he's claiming virtue is so slight a thing to attain, when it's the hardest of all things, as it seems to all human beings." And I said, "By Zeus, Prodicus here has happened to join up with us in our arguments at an opportune
341A moment. For it's likely, you know, Protagoras, that Prodicus's wisdom is something divine and ancient, originating in Simonides' time or even earlier. You, although you're experienced in many other things, appear to be inexperienced in this one, unlike me; I'm experienced in it as a result of being a pupil of this very Prodicus. And now you seem to me not to understand that Simonides probably wasn't taking this word 'hard' in the same sense you're taking it; it's the same as the way this Prodicus scolds me about the word 'terrible' all the time, when I'm praising either you or someone else and I say 'Protagoras
B is a terribly wise man' and he asks if I'm not ashamed to be calling good things terrible. For anything terrible, he says, is bad. At any rate, no one ever speaks of 'terrible riches' or 'terrible peace' or 'terrible health,' but instead, speaks of a 'terrible disease' and a 'terrible war' and 'terrible poverty,' as if what's terrible is bad. So probably with 'hard' too, Simonides and the people of Ceos take it either as something bad or as something else you don't understand. So let's ask Prodicus—for in justice, he's the one to ask about Simonides' dialect.
C What did Simonides mean by 'hard,' Prodicus?" "Bad," he said.

"Then that's also the reason, Prodicus," I said, "why he blames Pittacus for saying it's hard to be good; it's just as if he heard him saying that it's bad to be good." "Well what else besides that do you imagine Simonides meant, Socrates?" he said; "he was reproaching Pittacus because he didn't know the right way to distinguish the words, seeing as how he was from Lesbos and brought up in a barbarous dialect." "Are you listening to Prodicus here, Protagoras," I said, "and do you have anything to say in response to that?" And **D** Protagoras said, "That's a long way off from the way it is, Prodicus. I know perfectly well that Simonides meant the very same thing by 'hard' that all the rest of us do, not 'bad' but whatever is not easy but comes only through a lot of trouble." "That's just what I too imagine Simonides meant, Protagoras," I said, "and I'm sure Prodicus here knows it too and is being playful; he seems to be testing you to see if you'll be able to defend your own argument. There's a big indication in the line right after that one that Simonides didn't mean 'bad' by **E** 'hard,' for he says that

A god alone should have this privilege.

Presumably he couldn't mean by this that it's bad to be good, and then go on to claim that the god alone would have this thing and assign it as a privilege for the god alone, since then Prodicus would say Simonides was some sort of degenerate and no fit representative of Ceos. But I'm willing to tell you what Simonides' thinking seems to me to be in this ode, if you want to put me to the test on how I stand **342A** in the matter of verses, as you refer to this; or if you'd like to speak, I'll listen to you." So Protagoras, as he heard me say that, said, "If that's what you want, Socrates," but Prodicus and Hippias, the pair of them, were quite insistent, and so were all the rest.

"All right, then," I said, "I'll try to explain for you all what seems to me to be going on in this ode. Now philosophy is most ancient and most widespread among the Greeks in Crete and in Sparta, and **B** the greatest number of sophists on earth are there. But they deny it completely and play dumb, so it won't be obvious that they hold dominance over the Greeks by means of wisdom—just like those sophists Protagoras was talking about—and they'll seem instead to be dominant as a result of warfare and courage, in the belief that, if it were known that the source of their dominance was wisdom, everyone would take up training in that. The way things are, by concealing that, they've completely fooled the Sparta-enthusiasts in our cities, so that some of their imitators get their ears broken, wrap their hands **C** in leather straps, devote themselves to training in the gym, and run around in short smocks, as if these were the things that made the Spartans prevail among the Greeks. Meanwhile, when the Spartans want to mingle freely with the sophists in their midst, and get to be annoyed at

having to associate with them in secret, they issue deportation orders for those Sparta-enthusiasts and any other foreigners who might be in town, and get together with the sophists without the foreigners
D knowing it. And they don't allow any of their young people to go out into other cities, something the Cretans as well don't do, so they won't unlearn the things they themselves have taught them. And it's not only the men in these cities who set great store by education, but also the women. And you can recognize that I'm telling the truth about this, and that the Spartans are the people best educated in philosophy and arguments, in the following way. For if anyone cares to associate with the most insignificant of the Spartans, he'll find for the most part
E that in his talk he is to all appearance just some insignificant fellow, but then at some random point in what he's saying, like a fearsomely accurate javelin-thrower, he tosses in a remark worthy of note, short and pithy, leaving the person he's disputing with appearing no better than a child. And there are some people nowadays and some among the ancients who've noticed this very thing, that being like a Spartan is much more a matter of devotion to philosophy than of devotion to training in the gym, realizing that being capable of uttering such
343A remarks is the mark of a perfectly educated human being. Among these were Thales of Miletus, Pittacus of Mytilene, Bias of Priene, our own Solon, Cleobulus of Lindus, Myson of Chen, and seventh in this list[9] Chilon, said to be a Spartan. These men were all zealous admirers, passionate lovers, and students of Spartan education, and one can learn what sort of wisdom belonged to them from the short,
B memorable sayings spoken by each; they also gathered together and dedicated the first fruits of their wisdom in common to Apollo at the temple in Delphi, engraving those things that everyone recites: 'Know thyself,' and 'Nothing to excess.'

"To what purpose am I telling you this? Because this was the style of philosophy among the ancients, a Spartan brevity of speech, and this remark of Pittacus in particular was circulated privately among
C the wise with high praise: 'It's hard to be good.' So Simonides, who was ambitious for honor about wisdom, realized that if he could bring down this saying and come out on top of it, as if it were a famous athlete, he himself would gain fame among the human beings of that time. So he composed the whole ode against this saying, and for this purpose, scheming by this means to cut it down to size; that's how it appears to me.

"So let's all examine in common whether I'm speaking the truth in this. Now right at the start of the ode, it would appear crazy if one
D who wanted to say that it's hard for a man to become good were then to stick in an 'ah, but.' For there doesn't seem to be a single reason for this to have been stuck in unless one assumes Simonides is saying it in

9 Of the Seven Sages, ancient wise men who left no writings but were known for brief sayings.

response to the remark of Pittacus, as someone contesting it: Pittacus says that it's hard to be good, and disputing that, he's saying 'No it isn't—ah, but to *become* good is hard, Pittacus, truly so.' Not truly good, it's not in that sense that he means the 'in truth,' as though there were some people who are truly good, and others who are good but not **E** truly good—because that would appear silly and that's not Simonides' style—but one must take the 'in truth' in the ode as displaced, as a way of invoking the saying of Pittacus as a preface, as if we had Pittacus himself stating it and Simonides saying in reply, thus: 'Human beings, it's hard to be good,' and the responder says, 'Pittacus, you're **344A** not stating the truth, for it's not *being* good that's hard for a man; ah, but *becoming* good, built squarely in hands, feet, and mind, beyond reproach, *that* is hard in truth.' In this way it becomes apparent that the 'ah, but' is stuck in for a reason and the 'in truth' is rightly placed at the end; and everything that comes after this bears out that this is the sense in which he's saying it. Now there are many points in connection with each of the things said to demonstrate how well the ode **B** is composed—for it's quite charmingly and carefully done—but it would be a long business to go through it that way. Let's just go over its outline and intention as a whole, to show that throughout the whole of the ode it is above all a rebuttal to the saying of Pittacus.

"Now he goes on to say, a little after this, as if he were stating an argument, that while it's hard in truth for a man to become good, though possible for at least a certain length of time, nevertheless, to remain in this condition once one has come into it and *be* a good man **C** is, as you, Pittacus, say, not humanly possible, but a god alone could have this privilege,

> And for a man there is no way not to be bad,
> When irresistible misfortune brings him down.

So who is it that irresistible misfortune brings down in regard to ruling a ship? Obviously not the ordinary person, since the ordinary person is always down. It's the same way as one can't knock down someone who was lying down; one can knock down someone who was standing up at the time, so as to make him be lying down, but not someone who was lying down. So too, irresistible misfortune can **D** bring down someone who was good at resisting things at the time, but not someone who was always helpless to resist anything; a great storm that overtakes a helmsman might make him helpless to resist, and a hard season that comes along might render a farmer helpless to resist, and the same things could happen to a doctor. There's room for one who's good to become bad, as is attested also by some other poet, who says

> A good man is still bad sometimes, but good at others.

E But there's no room for one who's bad to get that way; it's just a necessity for him always to be that way. So when irresistible misfortune brings down someone who's good at resisting and a wise and good person, there's no way not to be bad. But you, Pittacus, claim it's hard to be good; now it *is* hard, but in one's power, to become good, but one has no power to *be* that way.

> For any man who acts well is good,
> But bad if he acts badly.

345A Now what is a good action in regard to written words, and what makes a man good in regard to them? Obviously learning them. And what way of acting well makes someone a good doctor? Obviously, learning about the treatment of those who are sick. And bad, badly: well, then, who would become a bad doctor? Obviously, someone who already *is* a doctor in the first place, and secondly a good doctor, since he's the one who could also become a bad one, while we who are ordinary people when it comes to medical knowledge could at no **B** time, by acting badly, become either doctors or carpenters or anything else of the sort. And obviously anyone who couldn't become a doctor by acting badly couldn't become a bad doctor either. And in the same way, a good man can also become bad at some time, through the action of time or being worn down or being sick or some other of fortune's blows, for this is the only way of acting badly: by being deprived of knowledge. But a bad man could not *become* bad at any time, since he always *is* that way; if he were going to become bad, he'd have to become good first. So this part of the ode also tends to this conclusion, **C** that it's not possible to be a good man and stay good to the end, but is possible to become good and for the same person to become bad, 'and they're best longest whom the gods love.'

"So all these things are said in response to Pittacus, and the things that go on from there make this even more clear. For he says,

> Wherefore for what cannot come to pass, never shall I
> Throw away my allotted span on a vain, unattainable hope,
> That any of us who partake of the fruit of wide earth will be
> A wholly blameless human being; in case I find one, I'll tell you.

D That's what he says, and through the whole ode he stays strongly on the attack against the saying of Pittacus in this same vein:

> I give my praise and love to all those
> Who do no shameful deed willingly,
> But not even gods fight against necessity.

This is said to the same purpose. For Simonides was not so misguided in his education as to claim to be praising those people who do no evil of their own will, as if there were any people who *do* evil willingly. Because one thing I'm pretty sure of is this, that none of the wise men thought any human being willingly goes astray or willingly **E** does shameful and evil deeds; they knew well that everyone who does shameful and evil things does them unwillingly. And Simonides in particular isn't claiming that someone who does no evil willingly is to be praised for that; he means this 'willingly' to apply to himself. He held the opinion that a good, well-bred man often forces himself to become someone's friend and to praise him; this often happens, for **346A** instance, to a man with an adoptive mother or father or fatherland, or anything else of that sort. With people of a bad sort, when something like that happens to them, it's as if they took pleasure in seeing the faults of their parents or fatherland, flaunting their criticisms and making accusations, so human beings won't charge them with neglecting their parents or blame them for the fact that they do. So there's still more to rebuke them for, and to their unvavoidable antagonisms they **B** add others they incur voluntarily. Good people are forced to cover up their feelings and give praise, and if they get angry over anything when they're treated unjustly by their parents or fatherland, they console and reconcile themselves, and force themselves to love and praise their own people. And I imagine Simonides too often felt that he himself had praised and extolled either a tyrant or someone else of that sort, not willingly but forcing himself. And this is exactly what he says to Pittacus, 'I'm not faulting you just because I like finding **C** fault, Pittacus, since

> Anyone who's not evil is good enough for me, anyone
> Not too out of control, who knows what's right makes a city thrive,
> Is a wholesome man—I have no complaint against him.

I have no fondness for criticism,

> For the race of fools is beyond all counting,

so if anyone delights in casting blame, he'd get his fill by finding fault with *them*,

> For surely all things are beautiful that have no mixture of the shameful in them.'

He does not mean this in the same sense as if one said, for surely **D** all things are white that have no mixture of black in them—that would be ridiculous on several counts—but in the sense that he's accepting

enough toward the middle sort to cast no blame. He's saying 'I'm not looking for a wholly blameless human being among all those who partake of the fruit of the wide earth, but in case I find one I'll tell you; on that basis I wouldn't have anyone to praise, but it's good enough for me if someone is of the middle sort and does no evil, since I give
E my praise and love to all those.' And here he uses the dialect of the Mytileneans because it's to Pittacus that he's addressing the 'I give my praise and love to all those willingly'—and one must take him as meaning the 'willingly' here in this clause—'those who do no shameful deed, though there are people I praise and love unwillingly. So I
347A would never blame you, Pittacus, if you were saying something even moderately reasonable and true; but as things are, you're believed to be telling the truth when you're exceptionally wrong, and about things of the greatest importance, and I do blame you for that.' That's what it seems to me, Prodicus and Protagoras," I said, "Simonides was thinking when he composed this ode."

And Hippias said, "And a good exposition of the ode you've given,
B Socrates, it seems to me. I, however, also have an explanation of it that's good, which I shall display to you if you'd like." And Alcibiades said, "Yes, Hippias, but some other time. Now, though, justice calls for the things Protagoras and Socrates, the pair of them, agreed on between them, for Protagoras to ask questions if he wishes, and Socrates to give answers, or if he wishes to give answers to Socrates, for the other to ask them." And I said, "I leave that up to Protagoras, whichever way pleases him more. But if he wishes, let's leave aside
C what has to do with odes and verses; but as for the things I asked you about first, Protagoras, I'd be pleased to get to a conclusion by examining them with you. For having a conversation about poetry seems to me to be a lot like the drinking parties held by the ordinary human beings one finds around the marketplace. Because those people, due to their lack of education, have no power to be in one another's company by themselves during their drinking, using their
D own voice and their own speeches, they put a high value on flute girls, paying big prices to hire the alien voice of the flutes, and that's the voice they spend their time together listening to. But where those who drink together are educated people of good stock and beautiful character, you wouldn't see flute girls, dancing girls, or girls strumming on strings; you'll see people with adequate resources of their own to be together without these childish diversions, using their own voice, speaking and listening in turn among themselves in an orderly
E manner even when they're drinking a very large amount of wine. And when such gatherings take place among men of the sort most of us claim to be, there is likewise no need for an alien voice from among the poets either, who can't be questioned about what they mean; the general run of people bring them up in their speeches, some claiming the poet thinks this and that, others claiming he thinks something

else, arguing back and forth about a matter they have no power to put to the test. Those others, however, let gatherings of *that* sort go **348A**
their merry way, and hold their gatherings among themselves with their own resources, testing one another through the give and take of their own speeches. They're the sort of people it seems to me that you and I should prefer to imitate, leaving the poets to themselves in order to make our speeches to each other by ourselves, on our own, taking up the speeches to put the truth and ourselves to the test. And if you still want to ask the questions, I'm ready to submit to you by answering them; or if you'd like, you submit to me, about the things we were in the middle of when we stopped going through them, so we can put a conclusion to them."

Now when I'd said these things and others of the same sort, **B**
Protagoras gave no clear indication of what he intended to do. So Alcibiades looked at Callias and said, "Does this seem like a beautiful thing for Protagoras to be doing now, Callias, when he's unwilling either to give an account or to make it clear that he won't? It doesn't seem that way to me. Let him either have a conversation or say that he's unwilling to have a conversation, so we can all know this about him, and Socrates, or anyone else who wants to, can have a conversation with someone else." And Protagoras was ashamed of himself, **C**
the way it seemed to me anyway, with Alcibiades speaking that way and Callias, along with pretty much everyone else who was there, begging him, and with a lot of resistance he let himself be prodded into having a conversation, and he called for questions to be asked so he himself could answer.

So I said, "Protagoras, don't imagine that I'm having this conversation with you for any other reason than because I want to examine things that I myself am puzzled by whenever they come up. For I believe that there's a lot in what Homer says, **D**

> When two go along together, one notices something ahead of the other,

for we human beings are all more resourceful then somehow, in every deed, word, and thought. And 'if one notices something alone,' he immediately goes around looking until he happens across someone he can display it to and with whom he can get it confirmed. In just this way and for just this reason, I too am glad to be having a conversation with you more than anyone else, since I regard you as the best person to examine everything else that it's reasonable for a reasonable **E**
person to look into, and especially virtue. Who better than you? Not only do you believe yourself to be good and of beautiful character, the way some others do who are decent themselves but lack the power to make other people that way, but you are both good yourself and able to make others good, and you are so confident of yourself that while

349A others hide this art, you, appearing out in the open, advertise yourself to all the Greeks, take on yourself the name of sophist, announce yourself as a teacher who imparts education and virtue, and are the first who has considered himself worthy of charging a fee for this. How then could one not be bound to summon you to this inquiry, to ask you questions, and to get you to share your thoughts? There's no way *not* to.

"Now about those things that I was asking about these matters at first, I desire to be reminded of some points by you again from **B** the beginning, and for us to examine others together. The question, I believe, was this: do wisdom, moderation, courage, justice, and piety, which are five in name, refer to one thing, or is there some particular being and thing underlying each of these names, each having its own power, with no one of them the same sort of thing as another? Now **C** you were claiming they aren't names for one thing, but each of these names applies to a particular thing, and all of them are parts of virtue, not in the way that parts of gold are the same sorts of things as one another and as the whole of which they're parts, but in the way that parts of a face are dissimilar to one another and to the whole of which they're parts, each having a particular power. If these things still seem to you the way they did then, say so, but if they seem different in any way, then delineate that difference, since I won't hold you accountable for anything you said then if you say something in any way different **D** now; I wouldn't be surprised if you were saying those things then just to test me." "All right, then, Socrates," he said, "I say to you that these are all parts of virtue, and that four of them are reasonably close to one another, while courage is very much different from all the rest. You'll recognize that what I say is true from this: you'll find a lot of human beings who are very unjust, very impious, very self-indulgent, and very unintelligent, yet courageous to an exceptional degree."

E "Hold it right there," I said, "because what you're saying is surely worth examining. By 'courageous,' do you mean audacious, or something else?" "Yes," he said, "people keen to go where most people are afraid to go." "Keep going, then; you claim virtue is a beautiful thing, and you hold yourself out as a teacher of it on the basis of its being a beautiful thing?" "The most beautful thing, in fact," he said, "unless I'm crazy, anyway." "And is it part ugly and part beautiful," I said, "or is the whole of it beautiful?" "The whole, beyond any doubt, is as beautiful as anything can be." "And do you know which **350A** people audaciously dive into wells?" "I do; the divers." "Because they know what they're doing, or for some other reason?" "Because they know what they're doing." "And which people are audacious about fighting from horseback? The horsemen, or those with no horsmanship?" "The horsemen." "And which people at fighting with light shields? The light-infantrymen or those who lack that skill?" "The light-infantrymen. And in all other activities, if that's what you're

getting at," he said, "people who know what they're doing are more audacious than people who don't, and they themselves are more audacious after they've learned them than before they learned them." "But have you ever seen any people," I said, "who are audacious about *all* those things, even though they have no knowledge of any of them?" "I have," he said, "the ones who are too audacious." "And are *these* audacious people courageous too?" "Courage would be a shameful thing indeed if they were," he said, "since these people are crazy." "Well, then," I said, "in what sense do you mean they're courageous? Didn't you say they're audacious?" "I do now too," he said. "So then doesn't it plainly appear," I said, "that people who are audacious in *that* way are crazy rather than courageous? And in those other cases, the wisest are also the most audacious, and since they're the most audacious, the most courageous? And by this argument, wisdom would be courage?"

"You're not remembering very beautifully what I was saying and what answer I was giving you, Socrates," he said. "I, when asked by you if the courageous are audacious, agreed they are. I was not asked if the audacious are also courageous; if you had asked me that at the time, I would have said that not all of them are, but as for the courageous not being audacious, nowhere have you shown that my agreement was not rightly made when I agreed they are. Next, you declare those who know what they're doing to be more audacious than they themselves were before, and than others who don't know, and you imagine on that basis that courage and wisdom are the same thing. But if you take that way of thinking a step further, you might also imagine that strength is wisdom. For, going on in that way, if you asked me first whether the strong are powerful, I'd say they are; next, whether those who know how to wrestle are more powerful than those who don't know how to wrestle, and they themselves are more powerful when they've learned it than they were before they learned, I'd say they are; and when I'd agreed to these things, you'd have an opening, taking these same things as evidence, to say that according to what I'd agreed, wisdom is strength. But nowhere, and certainly not here, am I agreeing that the powerful are strong, even though the strong are powerful; for power and strength are not the same thing. The one, power, comes from knowledge, and from craziness and spiritedness as well, while strength comes from nature along with good nurture of bodies. So too, in the other case, audacity and courage are not the same thing; so what follows is that the courageous are audacious, but the audacious are still not all courageous. For audacity comes to human beings from artfulness, and from spiritedness and craziness as well, just as power does, while courage comes from nature along with good nurture of souls."

"And do you say, Protagoras," I said, "that some human beings live well and others badly?" He said he did. "And does it seem to you that

a human being is living well if he lives in pain and suffering?" He said it didn't. "But what if he were to get to the end of his life having lived pleasantly? Does it not seem to you that in that case he would have
C lived his life well?" "It does to me," he said. "Therefore it's good to live pleasantly and bad to live unpleasantly." "So long as it's beautiful things that one lives his life taking pleasure in," he said. "What, Protagoras? You don't mean that you too, like the general run of people, call some pleasant things bad and some painful ones good? I mean, insofar as things are pleasant, aren't they good in that respect, apart from anything else that might result from them? And on the other side, aren't painful things bad in just the same way, to the extent they're painful?" "I don't know, Socrates," he said, "whether the question is
D one I ought to answer in so simplistic a way as you ask it, taking all pleasant things as good and all painful ones bad. It seems to me safer for me to reply, in connection not only with the present answer but also with all the rest of my life, that there are among pleasant things some that are not good, while among painful things in turn there are some that are not bad, some that are, and a third sort that are neither bad nor good." "But aren't you calling pleasant," I said, "the things
E that have some pleasure in them or produce pleasure?" "Quite so," he said. "Well, that's what I'm talking about; when I ask 'aren't things good to the extent they're pleasant?' I'm asking whether pleasure itself isn't a good thing." "It's just as you keep saying all the time, Socrates," he said; "let's examine it, and if the point under examination seems to be agreeable to reason, and the pleasant and the good appear to be the same thing, then we'll get together on that, but if not, that will be the time when we'll debate it." "Which way do you want to do it, then," I said; "do you want to lead the examination, or shall I?" "The just thing is for you to lead it," he said, "since you're the one starting the discussion."

352A "All right, then," I said, "would this make things clear for us? Suppose someone was examining a human being by his looks, in connection either with health or with any of the other workings of the body; he'd look at the face and hands and say 'Come on then, uncover your chest and back and show them to me, so I can make a clearer examination.' I too have a desire for something like that in our examination. Now that I behold the condition you're in on the matter of the good and the pleasant, that it's the way you say, I feel the need
B to say something like, 'Come on then, Protagoras, and uncover this part of your thinking for me as well: what condition are you in on the matter of knowledge? Does this too seem to you the same way it does to the general run of human beings, or some other way? The way it seems to most people about knowledge is something along the lines that it's not a strong or guiding or ruling thing, and since they don't think of it as being of that sort, when knowledge is present in a human being, as it often is, they think it's not his knowledge that rules

him but something else, sometimes spiritedness, sometimes pleasure, sometimes pain, occasionally lust, frequently fear, literally thinking C
of knowledge as they would of a slave that can be dragged around by everything else.' So is something like that the way it seems about it to you too, or does knowledge seem to you to be a beautiful thing of such a kind as to rule a human being, that if one recognizes what's good and bad, he won't be prevailed on by anything to do anything other than what knowledge tells him to do, and that intelligence is strong enough to provide support to a human being?" "It seems just the way you say, Socrates," he said, "and at the same time, for me, if D
anyone, it would be shameful not to claim wisdom and knowledge are the most powerful of all things in human affairs."

"That's a beautiful thing for you to say," I said, "and a true one. Now you know that the general run of human beings aren't persuaded by me and you, but claim that many people who recognize what's best aren't willing to act on it, though it's open to them to do so, but act from other motives. And all those I've asked what in the world the cause of this is, claim it's from being overcome by pleasure or pain, or E
being overpowered by one of those things I was just now speaking of, that those who do these things do them." "Well, Socrates," he said, "I assume human beings say a lot of other things too that aren't right." "Come on, then, and make an effort with me to persuade human beings and teach them what this experience they have is, which they claim is being overcome by pleasures, and on account of them not 353A
acting on what's best, even though they recognize what that is. For when we say 'You're not speaking rightly, human beings, but getting it wrong,' they'll probably say to us 'Protagoras and Socrates, if this experience isn't being overcome by pleasure, then what in the world is it, and what do you folks say it is? Tell us, the pair of you.'" "What, Socrates? Do we have to examine the opinion of the general run of human beings? Whatever happens to strike them, that's what they say." "I believe," I said, "that there's something in it to help us find B
out about courage, about what relation it might have toward the other parts of virtue. So if it seems good to you to stand by the things that were seeming good to us just now, that I should lead in the direction I believe will make this come into appearance in the most beautiful way, then follow. But if you don't want to, I'll let it go, if that's what you'd like." "No," he said, "you're speaking rightly. Finish it off the same way you began."

"Once again, then," I said, "if they were to ask us, 'What do C
you folks claim this is, which we were saying is being weaker than pleasures?' *I*'d speak to them in this way: 'Just listen, and Protagoras and I will try to explain it to you. Are you claiming, human beings, that anything happens to you other than this, and in these cases, that you're often overpowered by some sort of food or drink or sex, which are pleasant, and you recognize they're worthless but act on

them nonetheless?'" "They would say so." "Then you and I would
D ask them again, 'In what sense are you saying they're worthless? Is it because each of them causes that pleasure, or is itself pleasant, at the moment, or because it produces illnesses and poverty on into the time afterward, and leaves you stocked with many other things like that? Would any of them still be bad even if it left you with no consequences afterward, but only made you feel enjoyment, for the sole reason that it made you feel enjoyment of one sort or another? Do we imagine, Protagoras, that they'd give any other answer than that they're bad
E not for the action of the pleasure itself at the moment, but on account of the things that come afterward, illnesses and so on?" "I imagine," Protagoras said, "the general run of people would give that answer." "And by causing illnesses they cause pains, and by causing poverty they cause pains? I imagine they'd agree." Protagoras joined in saying that. "So does it appear to you, human beings, as Protagoras and I are claiming, that these are bad for no other reason than because they end
354A up in pains and deprive you of other pleasures? Would you agree?" It seemed that way to the pair of us. "So what if we were to put the question to them again in the opposite way: 'Human beings, you who also speak of good things as being painful, don't you mean that such things as gymnastic and military exercises, and treatments by doctors that take place by means of burning and cutting and medicines and starvation diets, are good things, but painful?' Would they say that?"
B It seemed that way to him too. "'Then is this the reason you folks are calling them good, because they produce extreme suffering and pains at the moment, or because, on into the time afterward, healthy and fit conditions of the body arise from them, and safety of cities, supremacy over others, and riches?' I imagine they'd say that." It seemed that way to him too. "'And are these things good for any other reason than because they end up in pleasures while freeing you from pains
C and warding them off? Or can you state any other end you're looking off toward when you folks call them good, apart from pleasures and pains?' I imagine they'd say they couldn't." "It seems that way to me too," Protagoras said. "'Then you folks pursue pleasure in the belief that it's good, and avoid pain in the belief that it's bad?'" It seemed that way to him too. "'Therefore this is what you folks regard as bad, the pain, and the pleasure as good, since you say that even feeling enjoyment itself is bad when it deprives you of greater pleasures than the ones it contains, or leaves you stocked with pains greater than the
D pleasures present in it, seeing as how, if it was for any other reason that you were calling the feeling of enjoyment itself bad, and there was any other end you were looking off to, you could tell us what that is; but you can't.'" "They seem that way to me too," Protagoras said. "'And is it any different again with the feeling of pain itself, or the same way? Do you folks call the feeling of pain itself good when it either frees you from pains greater than those present in it or leaves

you stocked with pleasures greater than the pains? Since, if you were looking off toward some other end when you call the feeling pain itself good, other than to the one I say you are, you could tell us what it is; but you can't.'" "You're telling the truth," said Protagoras. E

"Once again, then," I said, "if you human beings were to ask me, 'Why in the world are you talking about this so much and going on at such length?' I'd say 'Look at it my way: in the first place it's not easy to demonstrate what in the world this is that you call being weaker than pleasures, and then all our demonstrations are contained in that one. But it's still possible, even now, to change course if you have any way of saying the good is anything other than pleasure, or the bad is anything other than pain. Or is it enough for you to live out your life pleasantly, without pain? If that *is* enough, and you have nothing else to say is good or bad that doesn't end up being these, then listen to what follows from that. For I tell you, if that's the way it is for you on that score, your statement becomes ridiculous when you say that often a human being, recognizing bad things as being bad, acts on them nonetheless, when it's possible for him not to act on them, because he's led by pleasures and knocked off course by them. And you folks say, in turn, that a human being who recognizes what's good is unwilling to act on it due to the pleasures of the moment, because he's overcome by them. It will be perfectly obvious that these claims are ridiculous if we don't use a lot of different names at the same time, pleasant and painful and good and bad, but since it plainly appears that there are two things here, let's also call them by one pair of names, first good and bad, and then in turn pleasant and painful. Putting it that way, let's say that a human being, recognizing bad things as being bad, does them nonetheless. And if someone asks us, 'Why?' we'll say because he's overcome. 'By what?' that person will ask us, and it is no longer possible for us to say by pleasure, since this has had its name changed to something else, the good instead of pleasure. So let's give that person his answer and say 'Because he's overcome,' and he'll say 'By what,' and we, by Zeus!, will say, 'By the good.' Now if the one asking us the question happens to be an insolent type, he'll laugh and say, 'What a ludicrous thing you folks are saying, if you claim someone does bad things, recognizing that they're bad, not having to do them, because he's overpowered by good things.' He'll say 'Is this when the good things aren't worth enough to win out in you over the bad things, or when they are?' Obviously, when we answer, we'll say that it's when they aren't worth enough; otherwise the person we claim is weaker than pleasures wouldn't have made a mistake. Then maybe he'll say, 'But in what sense are good things worth less than bad ones or bad than good? Is it in any other sense than that one sort are greater and the other less, or one sort more in number and the other fewer?' We won't have anything other than that to say. 'Therefore it's clear,' he'll

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say, 'that by this "being overcome" you folks mean taking greater evils in place of lesser goods.' So that's how that stands.

"Now let's go back and substitute the names pleasant and painful for these same things, and let's say that a human being does what we were then calling bad things, but now let's call them painful things,
356A recognizing that they're painful, because he's overcome by pleasant things, when it's obvious that they're not worth enough to win out. And what other way is there for pleasure not to be worth as much as pain except their excess and deficiency in relation to one another? And this is the case when they turn out to be greater and lesser than one another, or more and fewer, or more and less intense. For if someone were to say 'But there's a big difference, Socrates, between what's pleasant at the moment and what's pleasant or painful at a later time,' I'd say 'But surely not in any respect other than in pleasure and pain?
B Because there's no other way for them to differ. But just like a human being who's good at setting things in the scales, when you've put in the pleasant things and put the painful ones in with them, and set what's near and far in balance, say which side is more. For if you set pleasant things against pleasant things, those that are greater and more are always to be taken, if painful things against painful things, those that are less and fewer, and if it's pleasant versus painful things, if the painful ones are outweighed by the pleasant ones, whether near by far off or far off by near, that action is to be undertaken in which
C the latter are present; but where the pleasant things are outweighed by the painful ones, those actions are not to be undertaken. Can these things be any other way than that, human beings?' I'd say. I know that they'd have no other way to say they are." And it seemed so to him as well.

"'Well since that's the way it is, answer me this,' I'll say. 'Do the same magnitudes appear larger to you folks by sight from nearby and smaller from far away or not?' They'll say they do. 'And is it the same way with thickness and multitude? And do equal sounds also appear greater from nearby and smaller from far away?' They'd say
D so. 'So if doing well consisted for us in this, in acting on and taking large distances while avoiding and not acting on small ones, what would appear to us as our salvation in life? Would it be the art of measurement or the power of what appears? Didn't the latter lead us astray and make us mistake the same things back and forth over and over again and have regrets in both our actions and our choices of large and small things, when measurement would have deprived
E this appearance of its authority, and, by revealing what was true, would have made our soul hold itself at rest, abiding in truth, and would have been the salvation of our life?' In response to this, would human beings agree that measurement is the art that keeps us safe, or say it's some other?" "Measurement," he agreed. "'And what if the salvation of our life consisted for us in choosing what was odd or

even, either in itself in relation to itself or one thing in numerical ratio to another, whenever it was necessary to choose the greater rightly as well as when it was necessary to choose the lesser, whether it was nearby or far away? What would save our life for us? Wouldn't it be 357A knowledge? And wouldn't it be a certain kind of measurement, seeing as how the art is concerned with excess and deficiency? And since it's concerned with odd and even, would it be anything other than arithmetic?' Would human beings agree with us or not?" It seemed to Protagoras too that they'd agree.

"'So be it, human beings. Now since the salvation of our life has plainly appeared to us as consisting in a right choice of pleasure and pain, of the greater and lesser, larger and smaller, farther and nearer, B doesn't it appear first of all as an art of measurement, since it is an examination of their excess, deficiency, and equality in relation to one another?'" "Necessarily so." "'And since it's an art of measurement, it's no doubt by necessity an art and knowledge.'" "They join in saying so." "'What sort of art and knowledge this is, we'll look into some other time, but this much, the fact that it *is* knowledge, is sufficient for the demonstration which Protagoras and I had to give about the things C you folks asked us. If you recall, you asked the question at the point when *we* agreed with each other that there is nothing more powerful than knowledge, but this always prevails, wherever it's present, over pleasure and everything else. But you folks claimed that pleasure often prevails even over a human being who has knowledge, and when we disagreed with you, you asked us after that, "Protagoras and Socrates, if this experience isn't being overcome by pleasure, what in the world is it, and what do you folks claim it is? *You* tell us." Now if at that time D we'd said to you straight off, "Ignorance," you'd have laughed us, but if you laugh at us now you'll be laughing at yourselves. Because you folks have also agreed that those who go astray in choosing pleasant and painful things—that is, good and bad things—do so through a defect of knowledge, and not merely of knowledge but of a knowledge you've further agreed just now is an art of measurement. And an action that goes astray in the absence of knowledge, you yourselves E surely know is committed through ignorance. So this is what being weaker than pleasure is, the utmost in ignorance, for which Protagoras here claims to be a doctor, and so do Prodicus and Hippias. But from assuming that it's something other than ignorance, you yourselves don't go to or send your children to the teachers who deal with these matters, these sophists here, thinking it's not something teachable, but by worrying about money and not giving it to these people, you folks do badly in private and in public.'

"These are the things we would have said in reply to the general 358A run of people. But as for you, Hippias and Prodicus, and Protagoras with you—for let the statement be yours in common—I ask you whether I seem to be speaking the truth or getting it wrong." It

seemed to them all that what had been said was preternaturally true. "You folks agree, therefore," I said, "that what's pleasant is good and what's painful is bad. And I ask to be spared the distinction among names Prodicus here would make. For whether you say pleasant or agreeable or delightful, or by whatever derivation or in whatever
B manner you take delight in naming that sort of things, most excellent Prodicus, answer me according to what I mean." Prodicus, with a laugh, joined in agreement, and the others did too. "And what about this, gentlemen?" I said. "Aren't all actions aimed at this, at living painlessly and pleasantly, beautiful? And isn't a beautiful deed good and advantageous?" It seemed so to them in common. "Therefore," I said, "if what's pleasant is good, no one who knows or believes other
C things, that are in his power, are better than the things he's doing, goes on doing them afterward when it's open to him to do better ones. And this 'being weaker than oneself' is nothing other than ignorance, and being stronger than oneself is nothing other than wisdom." So it seemed to them all in common. "And what about this ignorance you folks are talking about? Is it having false opinion and being wrong about matters worthy of great concern?" This too seemed so to them all in common. "Is it not the case, then," I said, "that no one willingly makes his way toward bad things or toward things he believes are
D bad, and that it's likely not in human nature to do this, to be willing to go toward things one believes are bad instead of toward good things? When one is forced to choose one or the other of a pair of evils, no one will choose the greater evil when it's open to him to choose the lesser, will he?" All these things seemed so to all of us in common.

"What about this?" I said. "Is there something you folks call fear or terror? And is it the same thing I mean? (I'm speaking to you, Prodicus.) I mean by this a certain anticipation of something bad, whether you folks call it terror or fear." It seemed to Protagoras and
E Hippias that this is fear or terror, but to Prodicus that it's fear and not terror. "But it makes no difference, Prodicus," I said. "But this does: if the previous things are true, is there any human being who'll be willing to go toward those things he's afraid of, when it's open to him to go toward those he's not afraid of? Or is that impossible, based on the things that have been agreed to? For it's been agreed that what people are afraid of, they regard as bad, and that no one either goes toward or willingly takes up things he regards as bad." These things
359A too seemed so to them all.

"Now, Prodicus and Hippias, with these things being set down in this way," I said, "let Protagoras here give us his defense to show how the answer he gave at first is right—not the answer that was absolutely first, for then he said that of the five parts there are of virtue, no one of them is of the same sort as another, but each has its own particular power; I'm not talking about that, but about what he said
B afterward. For he said later that four of them are reasonably close to

one another, but one, courage, is very much different from the rest, and he said I'd recognize that by this piece of evidence: 'You'll find, Socrates, human beings who are very impious, very unjust, very self-indulgent, and very unintelligent, yet courageous to an exceptional degree, by which you'll recognize that courage is much different from the other parts of virtue.' And I was quite amazed right at the time at his answer, and still more so when I went over these things with you folks. So I asked him if he called courageous people audacious, and he said 'Yes, and keen to go forward.' Do you remember giving these answers, Protagoras?" I said. He agreed he did. C

"Keep going, then," I said, "and tell us, what is it you say courageous people are keen to go forward toward? Is it what cowards are keen to go toward?" "No," he said. "So it's toward something different?" "Yes," he said. "Do cowards go toward audacious things and courageous people toward frightening ones?" "So it's said, Socrates, by human beings." "What you say is true," I said, "but that's not what I'm asking; what do *you* claim courageous people are keen to go toward? Is it toward frightening things, which they regard as being frightening, or toward things that are not frightening?" "But *that*," he said, "was just now demonstrated to be impossible in the arguments *you* were making." "This too that you say is true," I said. "So if this was demonstrated rightly, no one goes toward things he regards as being frightening, since being weaker than oneself was found to be ignorance." He agreed. "So then in turn all people go toward things they're audacious about, cowards and courageous people alike, and in that respect at least, cowards and courageous people go toward the same things." "But surely, Socrates," he said, "it's completely opposite things that cowards and courageous people go toward. For a start, one sort are willing to go into war, but the other sort are unwilling." "And is it a beautiful or a shameful thing to go?" I said. "A beautiful thing," he said. "So if it's beautiful, we agreed in what came before that it's also good, since we agreed that all beautiful actions are good." "What you say is true, and it always seems so to me in any case." "And rightly so," I said. "But which sort of people do you claim are unwilling to go into war, even though it's a beautiful and good thing?" "Cowards," he said. D E 360A

"And if it's beautiful and good," I said, "it's also pleasant?" "So it's been agreed, at any rate," he said. "And are cowards unwilling to go toward something that's more beautiful, better, and more pleasant, recognizing that it's so?" "But if we agree to this too," he said, "we'll ruin the things we agreed to before." "And what about a courageous person? Doesn't he go toward something that's more beautiful, better, and more pleasant?" "It's necessary to agree," he said. "And the fears that courageous people feel are never shameful fears, when they do feel fear, nor is the audacity they feel shameful audacity?" "That's true," he said. "And if it's not shameful, isn't it beautiful?" B

He agreed. "And if beautiful, also good?" "Yes." "And cowards, audacious people, and crazy people, on the contrary, feel shameful fears and their audacity is shameful audacity?" He agreed. "And do they have the audacity to do shameful and bad things on account of anything other than ignorance and lack of intelligence?" "That's how
C it is," he said. "And what about that on account of which cowards are cowards? Do you call that cowardice or courage?" "Cowardice, *I* call it," he said. "And didn't it plainly appear that they're cowards on account of their unintelligence about frightening things?" "Quite so," he said. "Therefore it's on account of this unintelligence that they're cowards?" He agreed. "And that on account of which they're cowards is cowardice—that's agreed to on your part?" He joined in saying so. "So cowardice would be unintelligence about what is and isn't
D frightening?" He nodded. "But surely," I said, "the opposite of cowardice is courage." He said it is. "And wisdom about what is and isn't frightening is the opposite of unintelligence about these things?" Here too again he nodded. "But unintelligence about them is cowardice?" Here he nodded very grudgingly. "Therefore wisdom about what is and isn't frightening, being the opposite of unintelligence about these things, is courage?" Here he was no longer willing even to nod, and was silent. And I said, "Protagoras, why won't you affirm or deny what I'm asking about?" "Finish it yourself," he said. "When I've
E asked you just one more thing," I said: "whether it still seems to you that some human beings are very unintelligent and courageous to an exceptional degree." "To me, Socrates," he said, "you seem determined to come out on top by having me be the one to answer. I'll make you happy, then, and say that it's impossible, on the basis of the things that have been agreed to, for it to seem that way to me."

"I'm certainly not asking all these things," I said, "for any other reason than wanting to examine what in the world is the case with virtue, and what in the world that very thing, virtue, is. For I know
361A that after this has made its appearance, that matter that you and I each have gone on speaking about at length, me saying that virtue is not teachable and you saying that it is, could most effectively get cleared up. And it seems to me that the upshot of the discussion we've just been having is as if a human being were to point his finger and laugh at us, and, if he got a voice, say, 'You guys are pathetic, Socrates and Protagoras! You, for one, after saying at the beginning that virtue is
B not teachable, now get youself rushing off in the opposite direction, trying to demonstrate that everything—justice, moderation, and courage too—is knowledge, which would be the way virtue would appear a teachable thing most of all. For if virtue were anything *other* than knowledge, as Protagoras was trying to say, it would plainly *not* be something teachable; but now if it's going to appear as knowledge through and through, as you're in such a hurry to have it be, Socrates, it'll be a wonder if it's not teachable. But Protagoras, for his part, after

setting it down before as teachable, now on the contrary looks like someone who's in a hurry to have it appear as just about everything **C**
but knowledge, and that way it would least of all be teachable.' So, Protagoras, when I see all these things upside down in such a horrendous mess, I'm all full of eagerness for it to get cleared up, and I'd like for us to go all through these questions in order to go on also to what virtue is, and to examine again in regard to it whether it's teachable or not teachable; that way old Epimetheus won't be able to trip us up so often in our investigation with his deceptions, the same way you **D**
claim he did us out of our share in the distribution. The Prometheus in your story was more to my liking than the Epimetheus; it's in order to consult him and take forethought for the whole of my life that I put so much effort into all these matters, and if you'd be willing, then exactly as I was saying at the beginning, the most pleasant thing for me would be to make a joint examination of them along with you."

And Protagoras said, "I give you credit for your eagerness, Socrates, and for the way you made the arguments come out. I don't think I'm **E**
a bad human being in other ways, and I of all human beings am the least apt to feel envy; in fact I've said about you to many people that I admire you the most by far of the people I've happened to run into, especially those of your age. And I certainly say that I wouldn't be surprised if you should get to be one of the men notable for wisdom. And we'll go over what concerns these subjects another time, whenever you want, but now it's about time to turn to something else."

"That's what one ought to do, then," I said, "if it seems that way **362A**
to you. And it's long since been time for those things I said I had to go to; I was just staying here to palliate[10] Callias." Having said and heard these things, we went away.

10 Literally, "to make the beautiful (or admirable) Callias happy." The reference is to 335D, and Socrates makes the same play on the sound of Callias's name (*Kallia… kalô*) that Alcibiades had made at 336B.